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AN APPRECIATION
BY TOM WOLFE

the weekly
Standard

AUGUST 30 / SEPTEMBER 6, 1999

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America's Leading Conservative

by Andrew Peyton Thomas

Justice Clarence Thomas

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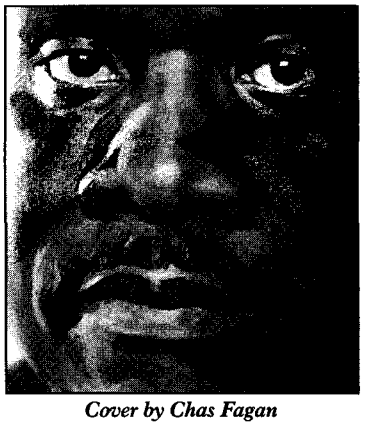

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Walter Reich's Vindication

In a welcome instance of congressional oversight, a House Appropriations subcommittee requested a management review of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The review, recommending reforms, was published last week. After last year's brouhaha surrounding Yasser Arafat's invitation, disinvitation, and reinvitation to visit the museum—an overture initiated by a Clinton administration official and pursued against the better judgment of the museum's director—the recommendations deserve close attention.

In the end, of course, Arafat never showed for his misbegotten photo op (the cameras turned out to be busy that day—January 22, 1998—with the breaking Lewinsky scandal). But the particulars of that fiasco aren't finally the issue. A danger of politicization will always hang about an institution devoted to such a subject. The Holocaust is a perpetually vexed matter, witness the existence of professional deniers that it ever happened. The national museum dedicated to its memory and study should be painstakingly insulated from politics.

To that end, the review by the National Academy of Public Administration urges strengthening the role of the professional director of the museum and keeping the board—the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, 55 of whose 65 voting members are appointed by the president—out of day-to-day operations. The review also underlines the inappropriateness of naming to the board State Department officials, with their obvious conflict of interest. At present, incredibly, both the State Department's chief Middle East negotiator and his deputy are members.

These findings vindicate Walter Reich, the museum director who resigned rather than lend himself to the Arafat caper. Congress should write into law institutional arrangements that put the museum where, as Reich notes, it always should have been: "off limits to any diplomatic manipulation."

Hatch's Triumph

There's nothing remarkable about finishing last, but don't tell that to Orrin Hatch. Hours after he brought up the rear at the Iowa straw poll (not counting single-digit returns for non-candidates Bob Smith and John Kasich), Hatch issued a press release that is a model of the let's-look-on-the-bright-side genre:

"New Candidate Hatch Has Solid Iowa Showing," the headline read. The senior senator from Utah, the release went on to explain, had "exceeded expectations considerably" with an "impressive showing." In fact, Hatch's showing had been "remarkable," and it was "gratifying we had this kind of support," the senator added. Indeed, even though he was ninth out of nine candidates who entered the straw poll, Hatch's campaign declared his showing to be proof he "can rapidly move up into the top tier of candidates."

Or to put it another way, the only way he can go is up.

The Way We Live Now

What follows is a partial transcript of the special *CNN Late Edition Primetime with Wolf Blitzer* that aired the evening of Tuesday, August 10, after day-long coverage of the shooting at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills, California. We pick up the broadcast at about 8:15 P.M., Eastern time.

Wolf Blitzer: Joining us now from Los Angeles is Alicia Brook. She's the mother of two kids who attend the day camp at the Jewish Community Center there in the Valley in Granada Hills. One of them was at the day camp today. Tell us what happened.

Alicia Brook: Okay. Well, my son, number one, did not go today. I'm very grateful he stayed home. He would have been at a field trip. My daughter is fifteen. She's a counselor with one of the groups, and they were still on the property when everything happened. So the bus driver got them out of there very quickly and moved them over to Northridge Park where they were there all day. But she said she didn't know at all at first what was going on. But there was a lot of panic going on at the community center.

Blitzer: How did you hear about what was going on?

Brook: I had called my son, because I was leaving work today early, as it turned out, and I called him to tell him I was on my way home. And at about ten minutes later, he paged me and said, "Mom, there was a shooting at the Jewish Community Center."

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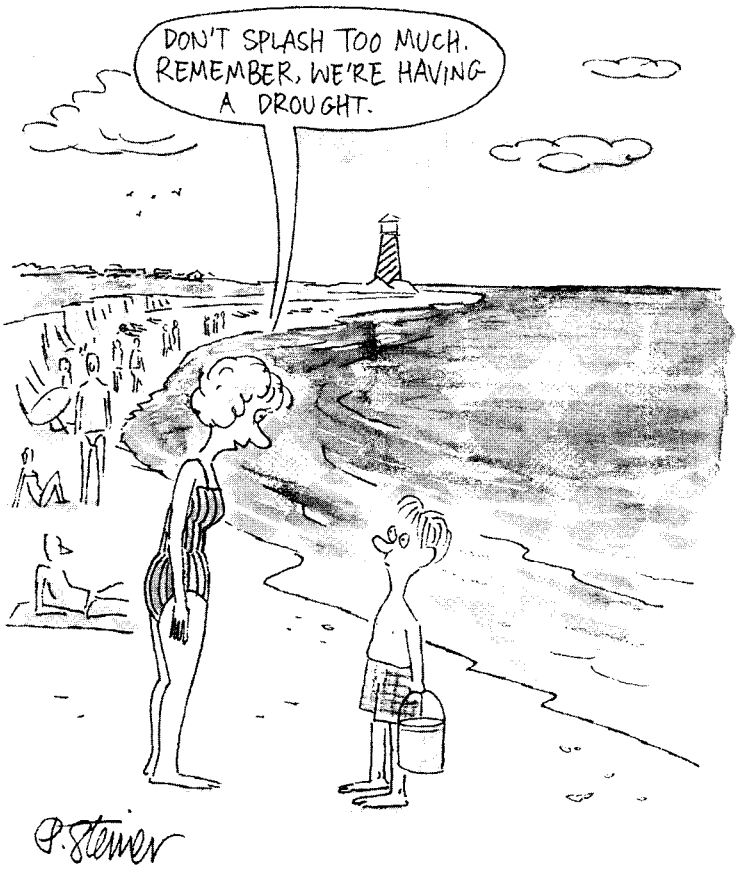

So, obviously, at that point my heart just about dropped, and I was at least thirty miles away from the Valley. So I had to figure on how I was going to get home in one piece to get to the Community Center. I got my son. I got home, and we came over here. And I've been here since about 12:50 [Pacific time, roughly four and a half hours earlier].

Blitzer: And did you have trouble reuniting with your daughter?

Brook: No. Actually, as a matter of fact, my daughter was already reunited with her dad. He picked her up. I've been here doing interviews. So I haven't seen her.

The Defense of Taiwan

The Clinton administration's failed China policy—the diplomatic equivalent of a "kick me sign" on the backside—bore more fruit last week: a remarkably impudent outburst from Li Zhaoxing, China's ambassador to the United States, that "American politicians" have no business getting involved with Taiwan, which is "entirely China's internal matter." Dealing as it does almost exclusively with Clinton administration officials and friendly "Sinologists," Beijing might have been under the illusion that Washington is of a single mind about Asian security. No more. An eminent group of American conservatives last week, under the joint aegis of the Heritage Foundation and the Project for the New American Century, issued the following statement on the defense of Taiwan, which should dispel any such fantasies in Beijing:

The People's Republic of China continues to threaten military action against the democratically-elected government of Taiwan. It has therefore become essential that the United States make every effort to deter any form of Chinese intimidation of the Republic of China on Taiwan and declare unambiguously that it will come to Taiwan's defense in the event of an attack or a blockade against Taiwan, including against the offshore islands of Matsu and Kinmen.

The United States should also make clear that while it is prepared to accept any resolution regarding Taiwan's future status to which both sides voluntarily agree, the future of Taiwan must reflect the will of the people of Taiwan as expressed through their duly elected government. If the people of Taiwan do not want to be united with the mainland until China becomes a democracy, the United States has a moral obligation and strategic imperative to honor that determination.

Efforts by the Clinton Administration to pressure Taipei to cede its sovereignty and to adopt Beijing's understanding of "One China" are dangerous and directly at odds with American strategic interests, past U.S. policy, and American democratic ideals. Failure to stand by Taiwan and live up to the spirit and letter of the Taiwan Relations Act in the present crisis can only exacerbate tensions and may well lead to serious miscalculation by Beijing.

The time for strategic and moral "ambiguity" with regard to Taiwan has passed. We urge the administration and leaders in Congress to make a clear statement of America's commitment to the people of Taiwan. Such a commitment is consonant with our nation's interests and ideals, and will help ensure peace in East Asia.

The statement was signed by Elliott Abrams, Richard V. Allen, Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, John R. Bolton, William F. Buckley Jr., Midge Decter, Edwin J. Feulner Jr., Robert Kagan, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, William Kristol, I. Lewis Libby, Edwin Meese III, Richard Perle, William Schneider Jr., Arthur Waldron, Malcolm Wallop, James Webb, Caspar Weinberger, Paul Weyrich, R. James Woolsey, and Paul Wolfowitz.

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Casual

Zuzu's Pacifiers

I got Zuzu to the emergency room at 10:20 P.M. Her symptoms were ambiguous but unnerving: lethargy, distension, moaning. Only two cases were ahead of us. The first must have been fairly serious, since the doctor sent the family home without the patient.

Next to us, the second patient was listless, a bit bloody but sedate. The woman with her smiled at me and asked, "First time here?"

"Yes."

"I'm here every few months," she said. She looked tired and resigned and had a battered tabby in her arms. She had six cats, she told me, and hardly a month went by without one or another of them getting clawed up in some brawl. "The wait shouldn't be too long," she said. "I've only been here two hours."

I tried to look grateful.

"What happened to your dog?" she asked politely.

"Oh," I said, betraying the frustration I felt at the sudden turn my Saturday night had taken, "she ate my daughter's pacifier."

Priscilla was born nine months ago, and to Zuzu, our 2-year-old Welsh terrier, the blow was devastating. At first she only growled at the baby, but now she expresses her jealousy by eating Priscilla's pacifiers.

Zuzu scours the floors for fallen pacifiers, digs through the diaper bag for hidden nipples, noses her way through the bars of Priscilla's crib. Given the opportunity, she'll snatch the thing right out of the baby's mouth.

And once Zuzu has a pacifier locked in her fierce little terrier jaws, it's gone. In seconds, she chews off the soft rubber nipple and chokes it down. The hard-plastic remainder she discards like the bones of a good kill.

I must have spent a hundred dollars on replacement pacifiers by now, and I knew it was only a matter of time before one of them got stuck and there would be vet bills to pay.

The receptionist at the 24-hour animal hospital told me it was quiet for a Saturday night. The next rush would come about 2 A.M., prime time for pets to be hit by cars.

Just when it looked like Zuzu and I were next, another patient arrived, a nervous beagle with four adults. The man checked in and told the receptionist that Ruben seemed to have eaten rat poison. The man and his wife recounted in necessary but disgusting detail the evidence leading them to surmise that the poor dog had snacked from the sack with the skull and crossbones on it. The receptionist agreed that Ruben should be tested for poison.

Ruben and his entourage settled down next to me to wait their turn—I hoped. By now, I had recognized his owner, Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, and was wondering, this being Washington, whether they'd get VIP treatment. Instead, they offered Zuzu a sympathetic smile and joked about their own misfortune. They chatted about some upcoming wedding plans, but my thoughts were elsewhere. The secretary, I inferred, bemused, has a rat problem.

And modern rat eradication relies on poison, sometimes with collateral casualties, as the Glickmans discovered. I'm sure the secretary has many scientists working for his department who are dedicated to finding poison-free ways of eliminating pests. But research wasn't needed to uncover the obvious answer for the Glickmans. It was sitting in my lap.

Welsh terriers were bred to kill rats and other small vermin. In fact, I once read that at the turn of the century, when the English still indulged in such sports, the champion English ratter was a Welsh terrier named Billy who could annihilate scores of critters in a minute.

So it occurred to me: Instead of keeping toxic substances around his home, Secretary Glickman could just borrow Zuzu and let her have at it. That would solve his rat problem, keep Ruben safe, and frankly, solve my problem too: Zuzu could chew on something more worthy of her than pacifiers stolen from a baby.

By this time Ruben and Zuzu were getting fidgety, pacing and sniffing each other as dogs do. Secretary Glickman was pacing too. Before I had time to broach our joining forces, the doctor came out. It was our turn.

The vet examined Zuzu and took some X-rays, then treated her for a semi-blocked intestine and dehydration. She was starting to perk up by the time we got home, and the next day she was her old troublemaking self. According to the secretary's office at the Department of Agriculture, Ruben is fine, too.

I still think it was a good idea, though, and I'd like to extend a formal offer: If you'll keep the rat poison out of reach, Mr. Secretary, I'll lend you Zuzu. Think it over. If Zuzu can do for your rats what she's done for Priscilla's pacifiers, you'll never see another one again.

Jennifer Felten

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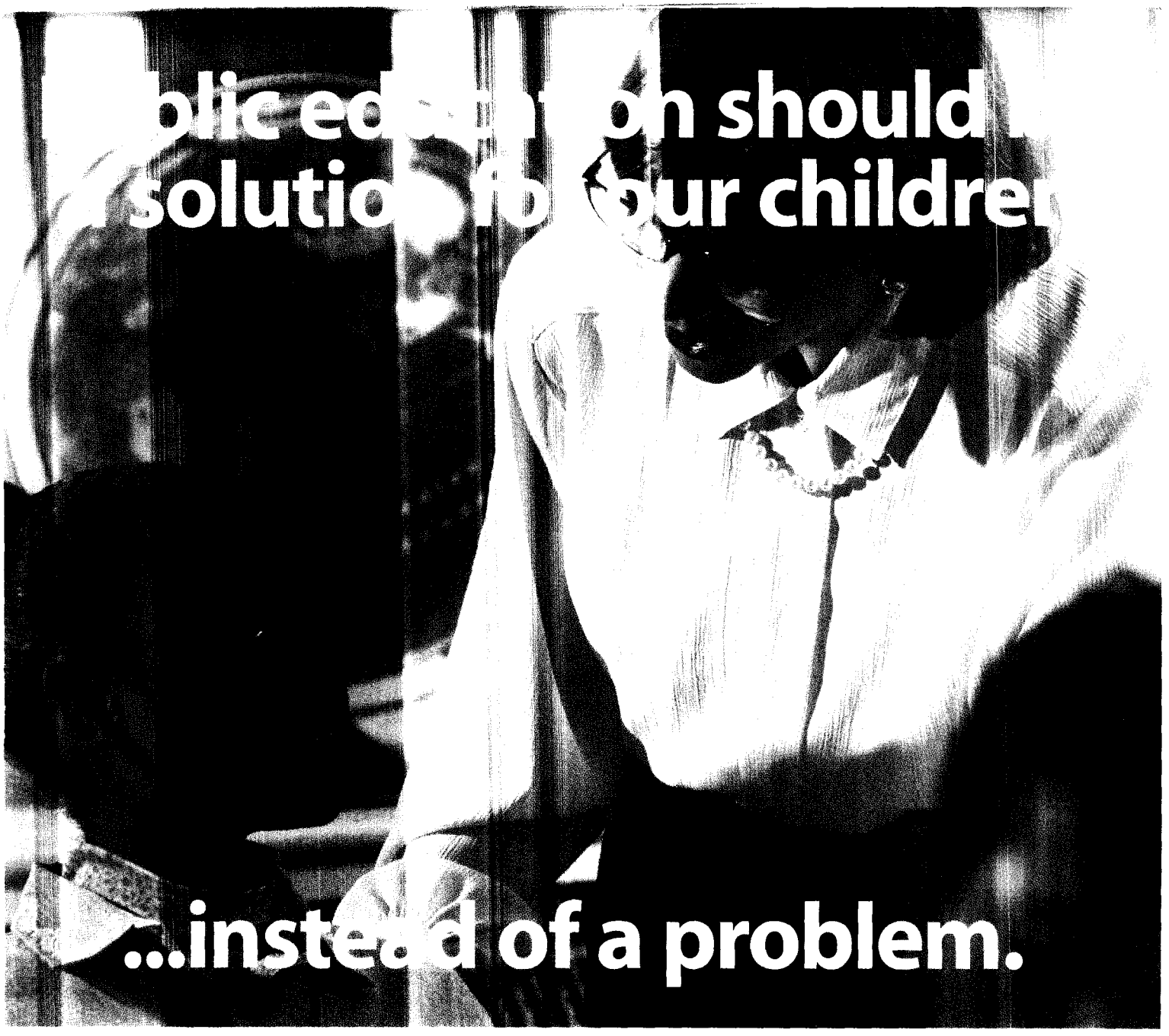

Compared to children from other industrialized countries, American students are performing worse on tests of basic skills than a generation ago. It is not uncommon to hear of a high school graduate who can't even read his own diploma.

The solution, some would argue, is more money for public education. Hire more teachers and reduce classroom sizes, and student performance will rise. At least that's the theory.

Yet since 1983 American taxpayers have increased funding for public education by a whopping 257%, even though student enrollment has grown only 21%. Classroom sizes are smaller than they were in 1983, and the number of teachers in public schools has increased nearly 50-percent faster than the number of students.

So if learning isn't about money, or the number of teachers, or the size of the classroom, what then is the problem with public education in America?

The real problem is that America's public education system is a monopoly.

Because government dictates where children go to school, the existence of every school is virtually guaranteed — regardless of whether a particular school is good or not. While there are plenty of resources available for the education of our children, the lack of competition for those resources means schools have no incentive to improve.

Parents should have the right to decide where their child goes to school. Of course, school systems would have to shape up in order to attract students. But that's the whole point. We expect our children to thrive under competition. Why shouldn't we expect our schools to do the same?

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Religious and Credible, Too

Tucker Carlson's article detailing the struggles of the Republican candidates in Iowa as they grope about in George W. Bush's shadow contained rather bizarre statements attributed to Elizabeth Dole's spokesman, Ari Fleischer ("The Agony of Not Being George W. Bush," Aug. 16). Fleischer resorts to the oddest of backhand compliments in his description of Bobbie Gobel, then head of the Iowa Christian Coalition, who had charged the Forbes campaign with buying votes.

According to the article, Fleischer thinks Gobel is credible, *despite* her conservatism and religious beliefs. This would seem to imply, in Fleischer's world, that the characteristics of religious belief and conservatism are seldom associated with that of honesty. Dole and her supporters often comment on both her strong religious beliefs and conservative values. Does she, also, have a credibility problem?

Why would a supposedly savvy political professional, as Fleischer surely is, express such a demeaning opinion of religious conservatives, especially when it seems a given that they are influential in the Republican party's nomination process? Perhaps he didn't mean it? Perhaps, but probably not, as the quote attributed to him seems to hammer the point home: "Whatever [Gobel] says about abortion or dying on the cross, she's not a liar."

Notwithstanding her surprisingly strong showing in the Iowa straw poll, it seems that either Dole or her spokesman (or perhaps both) has a rather low opinion of those voters they are attempting to attract. Such open derision of social conservatives, an unfairly maligned group, may earn the Dole campaign plaudits from those on the left and their allies; however, those individuals tend not to vote in Republican primaries.

Gregg Beaty
Cincinnati, OH

Smoke 'em If You Got 'em

As Matthew Rees notes, "Many lawyers argue that the federal government doesn't have a legal leg to stand on" in suing the tobacco companies for Medicare costs due to smoking ("Tobacco Railroad," Aug. 16). But the real question should be: Why isn't the federal government itself the target of a tobacco liability lawsuit?

Cigarettes were long included in the K-rations and C-rations provided to service members, and were sold in military commissaries at substantially lower prices than in civilian stores. During World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, the U.S. government, through the military, encouraged smoking. Many veterans did not smoke until they started receiving free cigarettes in their C-rations and K-rations, four in each, all non-filtered. In 1967, the PXs sold packs of cigarettes for a dime. Cartons were 80 or 90 cents. Drill sergeants and platoon leaders would announce breaks by yelling, "Smoke 'em if you got 'em."

What kind of no-good, mean-spirited, tobacco-loving, child-exploiting organization would insist that if you choose to smoke you are responsible for the consequences of your actions? Big Tobacco? No. Right-wing Republicans? No? Try the federal government.

In 1997, Veterans Administration Secretary Jesse Brown said it would be "borderline absurdity" to pay the health-care costs of veterans who freely smoked and subsequently suffered smoking-related illnesses. The VA said it was "inappropriate to compensate for death or disability resulting from veterans' personal choice to engage in conduct damaging to their health."

Coverage of tobacco-related claims by the VA began when the Bush-appointed general counsel for the Department of Veterans Affairs ruled in 1992 that illness resulting from smoking could be considered service-related. However, the Clinton administration actively worked to rescind that ruling, and the VA, under Clinton appointee Togo West, has approved only a small percentage of tobacco-related claims it has received. The Clinton administration has denied health benefits to veterans with tobacco-related illnesses by reclassifying tobacco use as "willful misconduct" akin to drug abuse.

It would be interesting to hear the feds argue that Big Tobacco is liable but Big Government is not.

Daniel John Sobieski
Chicago, IL

Taiwan's Dire Straits

William Kristol and Robert Kagan make a persuasive case that China may launch a military assault on the islands of Quemoy or Matsu due to the Clinton administration's anti-Taiwan moves and rhetoric ("Peace Through Strength," Aug. 16). To deter a disastrous military conflict, the following steps may help:

(1) Remind China that U.S. recognition of its government in 1979 and the three joint communiqués are all based on our understanding that any China-Taiwan disputes are to be resolved peacefully;

(2) Ask China to renounce the use of force against Taiwan and to refrain from further provocative actions;

(3) Urge China to send its envoy Wang Daohan to Taiwan in October as originally scheduled, without preconditions;

(4) Send the Pentagon delegation to Taiwan, as originally scheduled, to assess Taiwan's defense needs and to establish secure lines of communication between the U.S. and Taiwanese militaries;

(5) Send an aircraft carrier task force through the Taiwan Strait to show our support for the freedom of navigation through international waterways and our opposition to Chinese aggression.

To quote former congressman Gerald Solomon, "Taiwan's security is

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ultimately our security." No effort should be spared in steering China toward a responsible role in preserving the peace and stability of Asia.

JAY TSU-YI LOO
LANSDALE, PA

MORE GUNS, LESS BUTTER

David Tell's editorial on the need for more defense spending touches on key reasons why officers choose to jump to civilian life ("Spend it on Defense," Aug. 9). I am a 1994 West Point graduate, and served my five-year commitment as an infantry officer assigned to the 2-187th Air Assault Infantry Battalion, Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I terminated my active service and now work in the civilian sector. I can count on one hand the number of junior officers (lieutenant through captain) in my former unit who intend to remain in the Army. Granted, my 600-soldier battalion only represents a small portion of the Army; however, I can say with some certainty that the Army is witnessing a severe drain of junior officers throughout the organization.

The lack of adequate funding makes it impossible for officers to train their soldiers effectively. I distinctly remember exercises conducted with such a shortage of blank ammunition that soldiers were required to shout "bang" in lieu of discharging a blank round. Fort Campbell is an air assault division where the primary asset is movement and maneuver by helicopter. Due to a lack of funds, though, infantry soldiers rarely fly in assault helicopters. The Army simply cannot afford the fuel and maintenance costs to keep helicopters in the air. Hence, it is almost impossible to train as we would fight.

Without the needed resources to train, life as a soldier grows increasingly more frustrating and at times feels pointless. The many and varied deployments the Army faces make it more critical than ever that we keep its forces sharp and ready. Politicians are playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette with soldiers as they stretch the force across the globe without providing the resources to conduct realistic and intense training.

MATTHEW J. ANDERSEN
NEW YORK, NY

Bravo Zulu (Navy slang for "job well done") to David Tell for his editorial "Spend it on Defense." He did a wonderful job detailing the dismantling of the U.S. military that has occurred in the 10 years since Ronald Reagan was commander in chief of our armed forces. President Reagan was right when he said, "I believe it is immoral to ask the sons and daughters of America to protect this land with second-rate equipment and bargain-basement weapons." Unfortunately for our brave fighting men and women in uniform, these words seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

My only constructive criticism of Tell's editorial is that it glossed over the readiness crisis of the U.S. Coast Guard, our nation's fifth service branch. It may be the smallest branch of our armed forces, but it nonetheless has a vital role to play in our nation's defense. Its aging fleet makes it increasingly difficult for the men and women of the Coast Guard to live up to its motto, *Semper Paratus*, which means "always ready." According to Coast Guard commandant Admiral James Loy, the cutters and aircraft of the U.S. Coast Guard are the thirty-eighth oldest out of the world's 42 coast guards. Some of our cutters first saw service during World War II. No wonder some of the Coast Guard's readiness woes include drug runners operating faster boats than the Guard's, and Coast Guard assets lacking the proper sensors for important night operations such as search and rescue and drug interdictions.

JIM DOLBOW
ARLINGTON, VA

ATTACK OF THE AMAZONS

I'm happy to see that Tracy Lee Simmons has discovered the author's comments feature of Amazon.com ("Every Man His Own Critic," Aug. 16). This is not limited to living authors, either. Some months ago I noted that a certain R. Plutarchus had been offered the same opportunity.

Since Plutarch is no longer in a position to use the Internet, I took the liberty of responding for him. "Destined to become a classic!" was my headline. My comment included appropriate phrases such as "I know in my bones," and "What other author, living or dead, is as qualified as I?" To my delight, Amazon.com added my author's comments to the blurbs for the book (a selection from the *Lives*). After a few weeks some killjoy found me out and removed it. But I do look forward to author's comments from Dante ("Now I know—it's all too true!") and Stalin ("There must have been some mistake!").

PETER P. CHASE
ALPINE, TX

Tracy Lee Simmons's article completely overlooks the beauty of Amazon.com's customer reviews. Amazon.com is democratic not because it treats all opinions equally, but because it allows all comers to take part in a free exchange of ideas and opinions. In this sense, the customer review forum is similar to talk radio, and as on talk radio, sometimes the ideas and opinions are half-baked, or even raw. Frequently, however, they are engaging and stimulating. This no-holds-barred approach is what makes a public forum exciting.

Simmons's invocation of T.S. Eliot's thoughts on literary criticism is puzzling, because Amazon.com doesn't pretend to be a literary journal. Reading the customer reviews is meant to be part of the shopping process; their purpose is to help you decide on a purchase, not to correct your taste. Their entertainment value is a bonus. Furthermore, Simmons ignores the good news evident in Amazon.com's success: The large number of customers writing reviews indicates that a lot of people out there care about books. In the age of television, that is no small thing.

FELECIA BARBARO
BROOKLYN, NY

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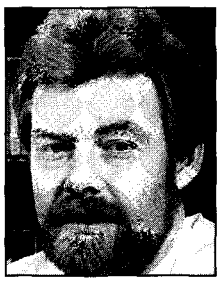

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the weekly Standard

THE SUBSTANCE DEFICIT

On August 14, the Iowa state GOP's presidential straw poll produced the obvious winner. In George W. Bush, Republicans have the two-term governor of an electorally significant state, a man with a famous name, a formidable organization, considerable charm, and a putative platform broadly congenial to the party's voter base. He also runs consistently ahead in national preference polls, by a wide margin, against any likely general election opponent. The primary campaign has months to go, of course. But it's safe to say that the Republican party establishment—and no doubt a fair number of ordinary Republican voters, as well—would be perfectly happy if it somehow ended right now.

Then there is the other party. They, too, have an obvious choice for president: the incumbent vice president, Al Gore, an experienced, knowledgeable, and serious man who has served in an administration neatly synchronized with a period of uncommon peace and prosperity for America. Gore's candidacy, too, has a good bit of standard logic on its side. But oddly enough, *this* frontrunner unsettles his party's professionals. He does not inspire, they complain. His campaign is plagued by staff squabbles and minor public missteps. All of which would be so much atmospheric trivia, but for the additional and unignorable fact that not six months before the first primary votes are counted, a full quarter of Democratic voters remain undecided whether they will support Gore, and another quarter—or more—seem inclined to support his only real challenger. The Democratic high command is alarmed.

WHAT ALARMS US IS GORE'S CHALLENGER: THE CLOSER YOU LOOK AT THE "WIDELY RESPECTED" BRADLEY, THE MORE HE APPEARS A NEAR TOTAL CIPHER.

And so, to some extent, are we. Not so much by the prospect that Al Gore might ultimately be retired and a Republican elected president, which needless to say hardly bothers us at all. Nor does it trouble us that a "logical choice" like Gore might face some serious primary opponent on his way to the nomination; vigorously engaged primary campaigns in either party often provide a service to the entire country. What alarms us instead is Gore's challenger and the campaign he is conducting. He is, of course, Bill Bradley, the former professional basketball player and senator from New Jersey. Which is pretty much all we know about him—and all he seems prepared or able to tell us. The closer you look at the "widely respected" and "decent" Bradley, the more he appears a near total cipher. And nothingness is not supposed to be a legitimate position in our national discourse—let alone a program sufficient to knock off a sitting vice president.

Early in his Senate career, Bill Bradley was a hard-working backbencher of some accomplishment; the 1986 tax reform bears his stamp. But in the late 1980s and early '90s, by his own account, Bradley grew bored and disgruntled with his job, and almost disappeared from view. He hardly participated in the health care, welfare, or budget debates of the first Clinton administration. And in August 1995, he announced his retirement, having concluded that "politics is broken"; that, in his alienation, he contained a multitude of Americans ("each of their stories has now become a part of my story"); and that "big ambitions" and "my own concept of service" must soon be restored to our public life.

Apparently, the time is now and he is the man to do it. Bradley is back and running for president because he thinks "my ability matches the national moment." Only he is just as aloof from the national moment as he was when last we saw him. He cannot even coherently describe what the moment is. He wants us to "see the collective whole." He wants to share with us the revelations of his "journey into myself." And what does that *mean*, exactly? Where does he propose to lead us? Bradley dismisses the question as beneath his dignity: "People think policy

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means legislation, a bill, but that is not connected to deeper yearnings. For love. For hope." Oh.

Maybe let's ask his staff for a more earthbound account of the senator's ideas. Here's Eric Hauser, the Bradley campaign press secretary, sheepishly responding to the *New York Times*: "[Bradley] spent the last 18 months teaching and writing, not building a policy base to run on. Shouldn't it be just as a child learns arithmetic or learns to paint?"

No, Eric, actually it shouldn't. Not when you're 56 years old, have 18 years in the Senate under your belt, and are advancing yourself as the next president of the United States.

All politicians are like this, the average barroom blowhard will explain: so much impenetrable double talk and vanity and vapor. But that is quite wrong, or at least it used to be until very recently where major-party presidential candidates were concerned. Adlai Stevenson and Gary Hart were famously disdainful of the vulgarity of daily politicking and held themselves apart as a better breed of man. But each also knew the practical Ps and Qs of his plan for government, and tried his best to make sure we knew them, too. Bradley is different. All at once, Bradley fashions himself superior *and* keeps secret from us the details of his special wisdom. An altogether extraordinary pose for a democracy's would-be leader, you would think. Who might be the senator's model, here?

Bill Clinton, we would argue. Clinton once was eager to be known as a straight-A student of the policy grind. Largely through his efforts, the 1992 Democratic nominating contest was a veritable festival of programmatic wonkery (remember *Putting People First*?) and his aides were pleased to brag that Clinton's first and most important victory had come in the "substance primary." Then, with the 1994 Republican congressional takeover, the whole symposium came crashing down. And the president abruptly reinvented himself, through emergency "triangulation." For a second term, he would be all empathy, mood, and personality to the virtual exclusion of anything resembling an agenda one might wrap one's mind around.

And it worked. As it seems to be working for Bill Bradley just now. In every meaningful respect, Bradley is the post-1994 Clinton all over again: a deliberately blank slate of sentiment and concern onto which voters are invited to project all those "yearnings" he talks about. Vice President Gore, by contrast, makes a poor empath and campaigns the old-fashioned way, with an endless stream of position papers and weighty speeches. Perhaps the electorate no longer wants such stuff from its candidates. Perhaps voters have been conditioned by Clinton to have their pain felt once in a while—and otherwise expect to be completely excused from thought.

It would be a delicious irony, and a kind of rough justice, if the vice president's career wound up crippled this way: by another politician's adoption of the nothingness strategy pioneered by Bill Clinton, whom Gore has so resolutely defended. And if that were all that was going on—if the phenomenon were restricted to the Democratic party, just this once—we wouldn't much care.

But there are signs that Bill Bradley's recent success represents a broader, glacial shift in the nation's political landscape. The avoidance or outright rejection of substance is now an entirely bipartisan technique. Elizabeth Dole, for example, is the Republican Bill Bradley, only worse: a presidential candidate of truly shocking and unprecedented vacuousness. It seems not yet to have hurt her. Even Gov. Bush and Sen. John McCain, candidates with vastly more imposing records, have so far proved maddeningly cautious about revealing their explicit designs for the country's future. It seems not yet to have hurt them, either.

But it is alarming, just the same, this slow regression of our political debate from relative clarity to calculated haze or even silence. And if it isn't arrested soon, it will inevitably hurt us all—not just Al Gore.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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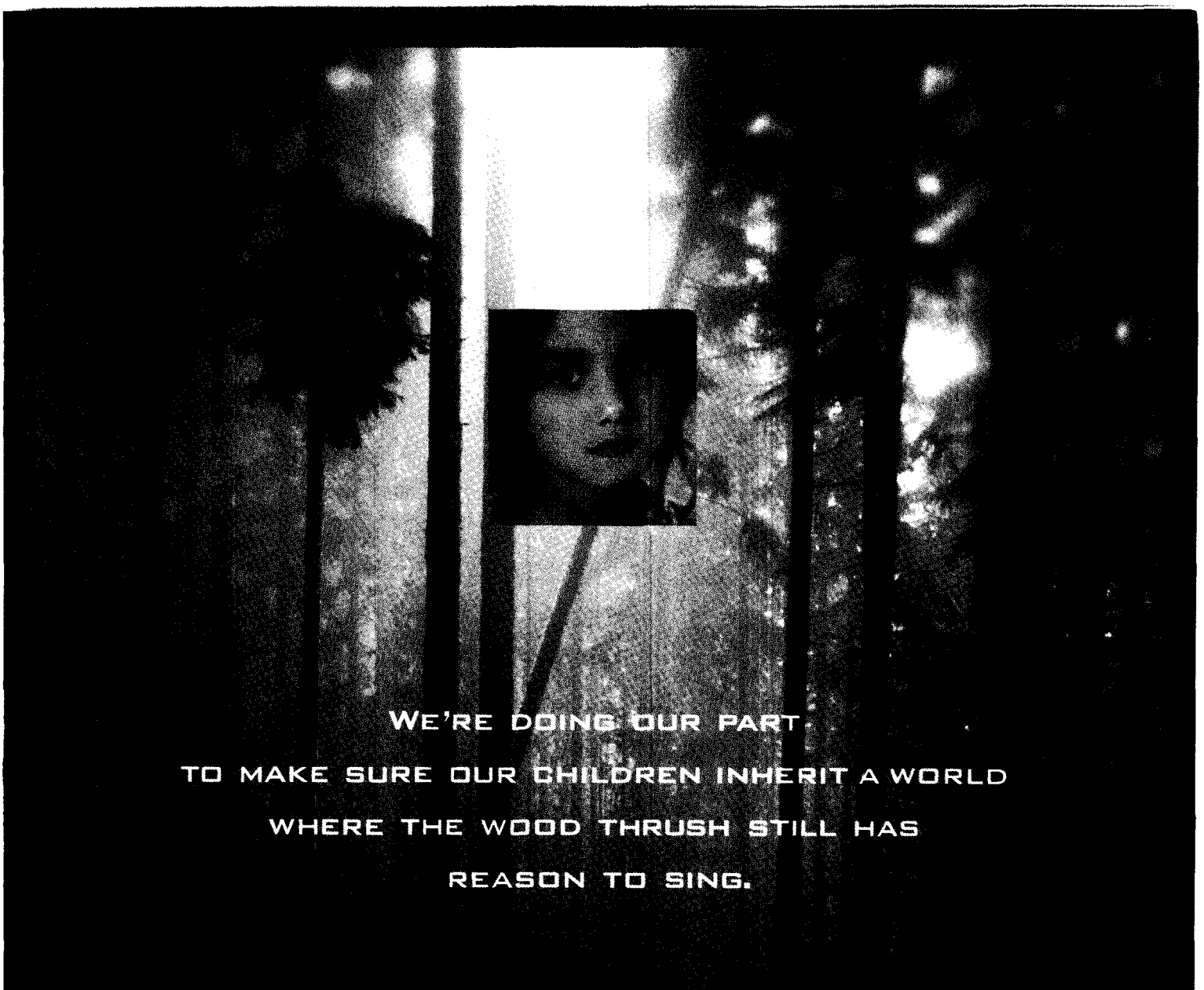

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Class Warfare in the GOP

by David Brooks

Ames, Iowa

There's a specter haunting the Republican party, the specter of class warfare. Besides its normal ideological divides, the GOP is now split between the Haves and the Have-Nots. The Haves—George W. Bush and Steve Forbes—glide through the campaign season in Mercedes-like comfort, while the Have-Nots—nearly everybody else—bounce around in the equivalent of secondhand Ford Escorts. The Haves arrive at an event in big caravans with massive batches of campaign paraphernalia. "I can give you 91 positions I've taken," Bush declared in Iowa. The Have-Nots arrive alone in a van, serving pretzels and popcorn at their sparsely attended dinnertime rallies.

The ultimate Have is not George W. Bush, the establishment scion. His campaign has plenty of dough but tends to spend it in a restrained manner, as befits someone with a long WASP lineage. Instead, it is Steve Forbes, whose campaign is spending money like a nouveau riche pool-installer on a Vegas spree.

Each of the campaigns at the Ames Straw Poll had a little hospitality area, and the atmosphere there said a lot about the campaign. Lamar Alexander's felt like the spring picnic for a prospering mid-size company. It was nice and genial, and kind of sedate. Pat Buchanan's felt like a truck stop. His Teamster supporters had parked their rigs all around, and there were more hefty tattooed men with biker beards than you see at the average Republican gathering. (If support at the straw poll had been measured by the pound, Buchanan would have won.) The Gary Bauer area felt like a Christian rock concert, and Alan Keyes's tent was like a meeting of 12th century crusaders readying to go out and massacre some Saracens.

The Bush area was nice, but nothing fancy. There was a VIP tent nearby, perhaps because the handsome, polished Bush supporters are the kind of people who enter every event through a VIP tent. But Forbes's area stood out. As Jacob Weisberg of *Slate* remarked, it looked like a birthday party Richie Rich would throw for himself. There was the air conditioned tent with the French doors. There were the Moon bounce, hot air balloons, and climbing equipment for the kids. The Forbes supporters were each given a goody bag when they registered.

And the glitzy spending continued inside the arena, where the speeches and voting took place. Each candidate was given three minutes for a floor demonstration. Some campaigns just had their supporters stand up and cheer. The Bush campaign brought in some teenagers to rush toward the stage and issue peppy but polite cheers of encouragement. But the Forbes campaign put on a light show that flashed the candidate's name around the hall. There were loud indoor fireworks. There were blasting horns. And there were hundreds of balloons that fell from the floor. Forbes claims to be an anti-politician, but there isn't a single tacky political cliché that his campaign has not adopted.

FORBES CLAIMS TO BE AN ANTI-POLITICIAN, BUT THERE ISN'T A SINGLE TACKY POLITICAL CLICHE HIS CAMPAIGN HAS NOT ADOPTED.

Somewhere it is written that a camel will sooner pass through the eye of a needle than a conspicuous consumer will enter the White House. And Forbes did suffer a form of divine retribution for his over-the-top production values. When his hundreds of balloons hit the floor his supporters began stomping on them. Nobody could hear the first part of his speech because of the popping balloons. Sensing this, the Bauer and Buchanan people started popping the balloons that had fallen at their feet. So the first half of his remarks were inaudible, and Forbes stood up there at the podium looking disconcerted.

"I could just imagine you media types sitting there with big smiles across your faces," one Forbes aide remarked after the balloon fiasco. Good guess. The media brigades enjoyed Forbes's comeuppance.

In years past, Republican voters haven't been too put off by big-spending campaigns. After all, in the Republican mindset people with money are victims more than oppressors. A reporter at NPR who makes $45,000 a year is member of the Washington elite, but a motel magnate worth $450 million is a member of an oppressed caste—forever hassled by bureaucrats and the IRS. And Forbes plays along with that mindset; the zillionaire Princeton grad spends much of his speech railing against the elites.

But this year the gap between rich and poor candidates is so obvious one senses a growing resentment in GOP ranks against the Marie Antoinettes of the campaign trail. As the Iowa race proceeded, the

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underfunded candidates crusaded more vociferously against the way the campaign is run than against each other or the Democrats. "This campaign should not be about raising money. It should be about raising values," Dan Quayle declared to the Ames crowd. "Never again will we let big money or the Beltway elites tell us who we should nominate for president of the United States," Buchanan roared. Lamar Alexander was practically apoplectic before his classy withdrawal. "The graveyards of Iowa are filled with favorites," Alexander exclaimed incoherently. The Republican party of the 1990s has a deep vein of populism running through it. There's a natural impulse to buck whoever seems rich and settled.

It can get kind of absurd. While striding across the Iowa State Fairgrounds, I listened to Orrin Hatch deliver a long tirade against the establishment. (Hatch, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, has been in the Senate since about the 19th century.) One Army veteran pulled me aside at a rally and told me that he was a contrarian who was fed up with the whole GOP establishment. To register his protest he was going to vote for Elizabeth Dole! (Dole's is the most anodyne campaign in political history, having drawn her campaign theme—"I say what I mean and I mean what I say"—from Popeye.)

Already one sees the candidates falling into the rhetoric that the class war has assigned them. The Have-Nots rail against the system that makes life so cushy for the sons of wealth and privilege. The Haves look upon the inequality as the benign arrangement set up by a benevolent God. Steve Forbes's anti-elitist rhetoric dries up when it comes to discussing how this campaign is being run. Bush's campaign is at least consistent. He's an establishment candidate running as an establishment candidate. Forbes claims to be an anti-establishment candidate, but he's running like he's Microsoft. There's probably room in this race for two more candidates: an establishment backup in case Bush falters and a Have-Not conservative who is anti-establishment through and through.

David Brooks is a senior editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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—*Transcript of Senate Rules Committee Hearing, July 28, 1999*

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READY, AMES, FIRE

by Mike Murphy

Ames, Iowa

THE AMES STRAW POLL may have looked like a huckster's carnival, but under the bigtop lurked the first killing field of the GOP race. The "invisible primary" of early money and endorsements is now over and the real race has begun. Where does it go from here?

Ames was the first demonstration of the inescapable gravity of the nominating process, in which tiny numbers of votes in early states are fantastically multiplied by perceived expectations to either crush campaigns or catapult them mightily ahead.

The first victims were Lamar Alexander, Pat Buchanan, and Dan Quayle. Alexander's weak showing choked off his fund-raising and ended his campaign. Quayle's even weaker showing marginalized him and put his campaign into the purgatory of the cash-poor: no money for TV, field staff, or a multistate organization. In other words, no campaign. Buchanan saw himself deposed as king of Iowa's religious Right by Gary Bauer. Unfortunately for the eventual Republican nominee, Pat's hot tamale applause lines may be headed for the top of the Reform party ticket.

No doubt about it, George W. Bush was the biggest winner at Ames. He said he'd win and he did. He's still front-runner by a mile. But Bush, Inc., wanted to clean clocks in Ames and that didn't happen. In the barroom primary held the night before the straw poll, in which reporters and campaign henchmen, led by Bush spinners, handicap the likely result, the official off-the-record unofficial Bush win was Texas-sized, anywhere from 50 percent (the favorite figure a few weeks ago) to 37 percent (the lowball estimate of the day before Ames). The implied Bush message: "We're gonna mow through these second-tier losers like extras in a Jackie Chan movie. Watch." But with just 31 percent of the total vote, Bush won small. Small enough to leave a tiny drop of blood in the water.

Here's why 31 percent is a sign of potential trouble in Iowa for Bush. This straw poll was big—almost one quarter the size of the likely Iowa caucus vote—so the 69 percent who voted for someone other than Bush cannot be dismissed with the usual patter about straw polls: a motley collection of high-turnout malcontents with nothing better to do than show up, wear funny hats, and howl encouragement at Alan Keyes.

If on that cold Iowa night next January, Bush "wins" the Iowa caucus with a number like 31 percent, the media will gleefully devour him. Remember poor old Walter Mondale. He beat Gary Hart 49 percent to 16.5 percent in Iowa. That win was widely reported as a loss. And Hart was flung into New Hampshire on the magic carpet of "momentum." It's the front-runner's nightmare, and to avoid it next January, Bush is going to have to do better. Iowa will now be a race between Bush, Forbes, Dole, and Bauer. Paid television ads will pop up soon. Despite the silly myths about retail campaigning, in Iowa as in all the early states, paid advertising is the big campaign driver.

By placing a respectable third in the straw poll, Elizabeth Dole got back in the race. Her problem? Success demands more success. That means move polls, raise money, answer questions. Dole has cooked up her own new adjective ideology—"courageous conservatism" (get it?). Look for that slogan and more on Iowa and New Hampshire television as soon as Dole tries to take voter share away from Bush and move media polls. To gain traction, Dole is going to have to ratchet up her performance beyond her feel-good stump speech. Her dodgy performance with the national media on whether Medicaid should fund abortions last week was not a good sign. Still, Dole is now Bush's main competitor for the regular Republican vote in Iowa.

Gary Bauer also needs to get on the air and start solidifying his support from religious conservatives. Bauer has an opportunity to surprise a lot of people. Nearly a third of the voters in the typical Iowa caucus are religious conservatives, so if Bauer can unite that vote behind his candidacy—as Pat Robertson did in 1988—he'll finish second, or even first. Bauer has some cutting issues—abortion, China—that count with a big chunk of the caucus electorate; he needs to put them in play on television.

Forbes has the toughest job. Nobody in the national press thinks he can be nominated, and they're right. The Forbes Ames spin was to cite his decent second-place result and declare it a two-man race. The media agreed up to a point: Okay, it's a two-man race between Gov. Bush and an unelectable oddity, so it's over, Bush wins. Forbes will dust off his trusty video blowtorch soon and start trying to tune up George W. with attack ads. It's a zero-sum theory: Drive Bush and Dole's negatives so high that there is nobody left to support but Forbes. That strategy didn't work last time because Forbes is, well, Forbes, and even Republican primary voters don't seem to want to vote for him. It'll fail again. Nonetheless, Forbes's money makes him a powerful catalytic factor in the race. He could make the next six months very expensive in cash and headaches for the other candidates, particularly Bush.

The Bush campaign needs to reduce expectations

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and buy some insurance for the Iowa caucus by persuading reporters that his huge money and endorsement advantages mean a firewall of support in the states beyond Iowa. Look for Bush to make that strategy believable with early television ads in later states, perhaps even California. Meanwhile, back in Iowa he'll have to fend off the Forbes/Bauer attack from the right and deal with Elizabeth Dole's attempt to break through as the regular Republican alternative.

Bush can handle a fight. His treasury is the strongest in GOP primary history, emitting a force field of inevitability that makes it brutally difficult for his opponents to raise money. He can set the agenda and make news. Most GOP primary voters are for him, albeit with soft support. There are few natural opportunities in the process for the Bush campaign to hit the rocks between now and the Iowa caucus; so Bush will control his destiny with his own performance over the next five months. The smartest move for the Bush campaign is to prepare for some bumps and *use them* to let expectations slacken a bit. Then harness his campaign's tremendous muscle at the right time to fuel the "great comeback" and make his near-certain Iowa win in January *mean something*. The "is it bigger than a breadbox?" controversy swirling around rumors of cocaine use by Bush is just such a bump in the road and offers a corresponding opportunity to reduce expectations preparatory to the roaring comeback. The caucus and the 36-day Iowa-to-California nominating process is five long months away; how well Austin handles the rhythm of this period will be the real strategic test of the Bush campaign.

Senator John McCain has the best chance of upsetting Bush, but the fewest choices of how to do it. McCain's shot is to let Iowa change the race—Bush wins below expectations, Bauer second, Forbes or Dole a weak third—and be craftily prepared in New Hampshire and South Carolina to deliver two stinging defeats to Bush. I think Bradley will be powerfully upsetting Gore in New Hampshire at the time, and McCain will benefit if an upset virus is in the New England air. It's a tall order, but McCain is wise to marshal his resources and create a formidable campaign in New Hampshire, still the linchpin of the nomination process and still the iceberg that can puncture the hull of any front-runner. McCain will feel the pain of being partially ignored by the media if he stays out of Iowa's headlines, but as the leader of the anti-ethanol forces in the Senate, he can't get a good story out of Iowa. Timing is the key to the underdog's campaign, and since everything that happens in Iowa will happen again and with far greater impact in New Hampshire, McCain has picked the right place to plot his ambush.

Cruel gravity has begun to winnow the field in the presidential race. It's down to five, and it ain't over yet.

Mike Murphy has run 16 successful Republican senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns. He's given free advice this year to Sen. John McCain.

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Tolerance, Kosovo Style

by David Bosco

Pristina, Kosovo

Grills on the windows keep out the hand grenades. British soldiers keep out the Albanians. This is the nongovernmental Center for Peace and Tolerance in Kosovo's capital city, and it is one of the last refuges for the city's dwindling Serb population. Here, in cooperation with British troops, young Serbs provide assistance to the predominantly old and scared Serbs who remain. A telephone hotline allows Serbs to pass calls for help to the NATO troops who continuously patrol the city.

There has been no shortage of business. A staffer at the center hands me a rap sheet for August 17 that includes a kidnapping, several beatings, an attempted rape, and a hand grenade attack that day alone. The effect of the violence has been predictable: The United Nations estimates that no more than 2,000 Serbs remain in a city once home to 30,000. The great majority of these left in a rush as NATO troops arrived in the province. The violence that has plagued the city in the past weeks has reduced the number further. The tactics are fairly standard: A Serb household will receive a threatening letter or visit, which is followed by a more forceful message a few days later. In several cases, the message has come in the form of a bullet through the door.

The international community has not been idle in the face of the violence. The war was fought for human rights, and the politicians and generals who won it are loath to see the peace endorse anything less. The measures the British army has taken in Pristina—including cooperation with the Center—are impressive. Soldiers vigorously patrol high-risk areas, even stationing guards near vulnerable homes and apartments. On what have become known here as "granny patrols," troops and U.N. workers distribute food and provide medical care to elderly Serbs afraid to leave their homes. At night, helicopters hover over the city, lashing streets and apartment buildings with high intensity searchlights.

The irony is that defeat in Kosovo has given the Serbs what they claimed for years, even while they were the ruling minority here: true victimhood. More than a decade of Serb-imposed near-apartheid in the province, three months of brutal ethnic cleansing of Albanians, and now the Albanians' return under the protection of a U.N.-authorized NATO force called KFOR have produced the state of siege that the Serbs always claimed existed. The Serbs remaining in Kosovo and bearing the brunt of Albanian anger are those least responsible for the recent crimes, and Belgrade has spared no effort to milk their plight. This policy even extends to pushing back Serbs who leave Kosovo. The U.N. reports that Kosovo Serbs receive a cold shoulder on arrival in Serbia proper—no health care, no jobs, and little humanitarian assistance. In Serbia, Kosovo's Serbs are human reminders of defeat and political liabilities for the regime. In Kosovo, they are a powerful claim on international attention and a means of dividing the regime's domestic opposition.

The Kosovo card is, of course, what transformed Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic from apparatchik to autocrat. His defiant 1987 speech to a crowd of Serbs in the town of Kosovo Polje (near the site of the famous 1389 battle) launched the nationalist revival on which he built his power. "Nobody should dare to beat you again," he told the Serb crowd that day. It is in large part because of its history that Kosovo Polje today holds one of the biggest concentrations of Serbs left in Kosovo. In the days after NATO's arrival, it was thought that if the Serbs left Kosovo Polje they would leave the province altogether. Faced with this grim possibility, NATO and the Milosevic regime tacitly cooperated in encouraging Serbs to remain. Lieutenant General Mike Jackson, commander of KFOR, made several speeches in the town, and ministers in the Serb government (unindicted ones) made the trek from Belgrade to plead for persistence.

The pleas have worked, for the moment. On the street in front of the House of Culture—site of Milosevic's speech—old Serb women still peddle fresh vegetables and bitter defiance. Milosevic will come again, they tell me. NATO will stay only a year, and then "we will take care of things our own way." The spirits of Serbs are bolstered by the presence of a Russian army contingent that has garrisoned the House of Culture and a few other spots in the town. But the Russians, according to British troops, are as much burden as ally, relying on the townspeople for fuel and food and drinking heavily in the dusty watering holes. Instead of patrolling smartly like the British, they lounge desultorily in their trucks or wander the markets.

Just down the road, across some invisible dividing line, are Kosovo Polje's Albanians. They have been streaming back ever since NATO's arrival and now constitute almost half the town's population. Flush with victory and outraged at the destruction of their homes, they are eager to press their advantage against the Serbs. Naili Ferizi came home and found, to her surprise, that her Serb neighbors still lived in the

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Fall 1999

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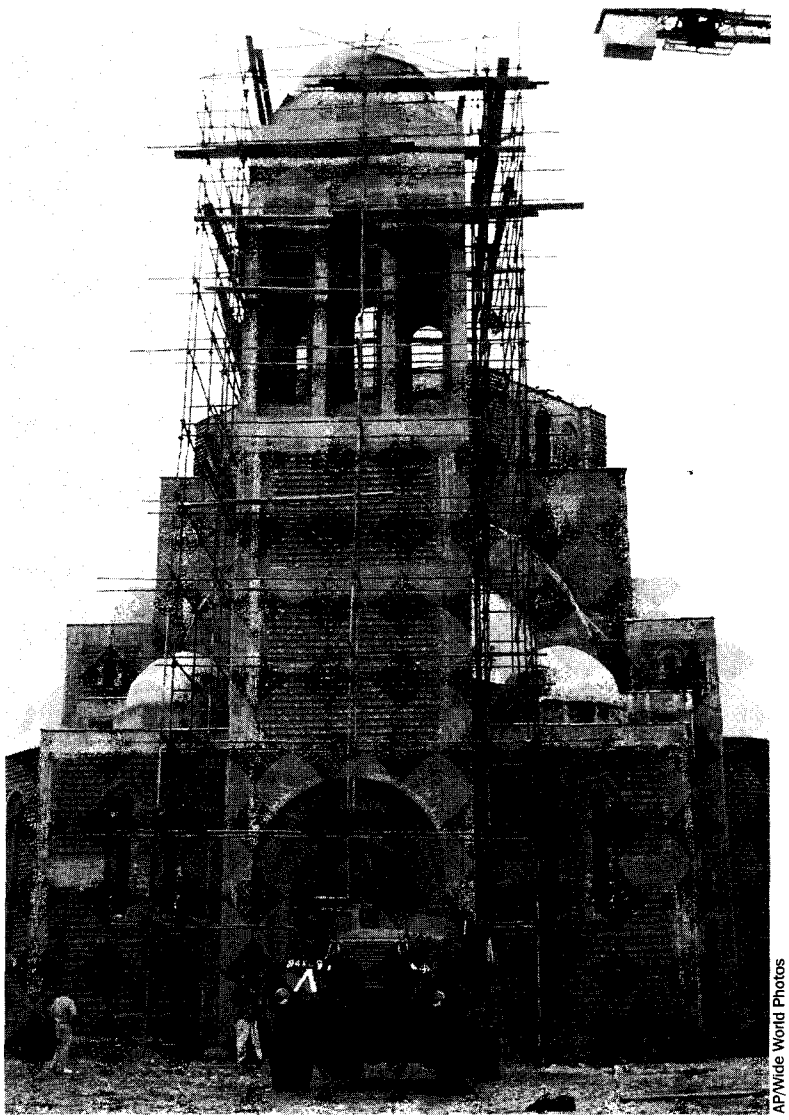
town. "I've asked them several times why they bother staying," she explains, puzzled at their obstinacy.

A U.N. flag and a NATO tank ornament the town's municipal building, providing the symbol and substance of the international effort here. The local KFOR commander and a U.N. official act as virtual mayors, and on six occasions they have gathered Serb and Albanian representatives to hash out the running of the town. This is not democracy. "We give them homework," says the U.N. official assigned to Kosovo Polje. These local representatives will, it is hoped, someday form the basis for a new multiethnic town government. In the absence of any other authority, however, KFOR picks up the trash, provides security, and invests in the town's crumbling infrastructure. One of the biggest problems, says KFOR's Major Simon Fovargue, is psychological. Accustomed to running the province, he says, Serbs hardly recognize equal rights when they see them.

The apparently unreconstructed nationalism of the Serbs who remain makes long-term coexistence difficult to imagine. At the Center for Peace and Tolerance, there seems precious little of the latter among the Serb staff, who are unapologetic about the Serbian reign of terror that led directly to the cataclysm whose results they now face. On the cluttered desks in the Center can be found titles like *Kosovo Dossier: From Terrorism to Independence* and other glossy propaganda that Belgrade has produced in profusion. It is not a basis for dialogue.

Whether and when tolerance develops in Kosovo may also depend in part on the nature of the leadership that emerges in the Albanian community. Today, Albanian political power is contested by several power centers, most prominently the Kosovo Liberation Army and the political party headed by Ibrahim Rugova, the pacifist who led Kosovo's Albanians for much of the past decade. He has a measure of international legitimacy, they have the guns (though NATO is doing what it can to lighten their load). But it is not clear that either group will be able to foster tolerance in the near future. Agron Bajrami, an editor at the daily *Koha Ditore*, argues that the tolerance and multiethnicity the international community seeks are "something the population is not prepared for" after the ethnic cleansing and more than a decade of oppression.

Near the center of Pristina, on a rise that overlooks the main street, barbed wire and NATO armored vehicles guard a partially constructed Serbian Orthodox church. Since an explosion damaged the structure last month, NATO has maintained a round-the-clock presence. One of the last gasps of the Serb colonization effort in Kosovo, the church will likely never be completed. It has no worshippers and no priest. Guarding it is a symbolic act that, however right, will be futile in the end. The same may soon be said of the effort to keep Serbs in Kosovo.



AP/Wide World Photos

NATO troops guarding an unfinished Serbian Orthodox church in Pristina

David Bosco worked in Bosnia from 1996 to 1998 as a journalist and political analyst.

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Pests in Congress

by Brian Doherty

On August 2, the Environmental Protection Agency announced new restrictions and bans on the use of methyl parathion and azinphos methyl, two pesticides used widely and safely on fruits and certain vegetables. The next day, representatives of the American Crop Protection Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and other organizations with an interest in the use of pesticides, appeared before a House Agriculture subcommittee to testify that the EPA's new bans and restrictions would be disastrous.

August 2 was also the third anniversary of the Food Quality Protection Act, which gave the EPA the authority to review all pesticides in use and enact new restrictions. In 1996, the American Crop Protection Association and many other trade associations supported the passage of the Food Quality Protection Act. But they are not alone in their newfound contempt. Many politicians, too, who supported the Food Quality Protection Act, which faced no opposition when it was passed three years ago, are now shocked that the EPA, having been given the authority to reexamine pesticides and ban them, is doing so.

The witnesses at the hearing were clearly caught off guard by the EPA's far-reaching restrictions. But not everyone was surprised. Several free-market policy analysts warned years ago that the Food Quality Protection Act would hit pesticide use hard and be no real improvement on the existing restrictions set up by the Delaney Clause, a '50s-era anti-pesticide measure. Albert Meyerhoff of the National Resources Defense Council pointed out, in a 1996 letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, that it would indeed lead to bans on the use of various pesticides: "The overall goal of this reform is to slowly but surely reduce reliance by American agriculture on pesticides." Obviously, groups like the American Crop Protection Association weren't listening.

Environmentalists, however, were. Many, along with Rep. Henry Waxman of California, now insist the EPA hasn't gone far enough in restricting pesticides. The sad thing is, legally, they are probably right. The even sadder thing is, empirically, they are wrong. The Food Quality Protection Act was passed as a save-the-children measure, protected from scrutiny by the now-discredited claim that pesticides are "endocrine disrupters." Adults, this argument held, could safely consume the minuscule, and often undetectable, amounts of pesticide residue found on food, but kids, with their tender nervous systems and growing bodies, could not.

Before the Food Quality Protection Act became law, the EPA already had measures for how much pesticide can be safely consumed. They started with the smallest possible amount of a pesticide that might, judging from animal tests, cause health problems. The EPA then divided that amount by 10, guided by the

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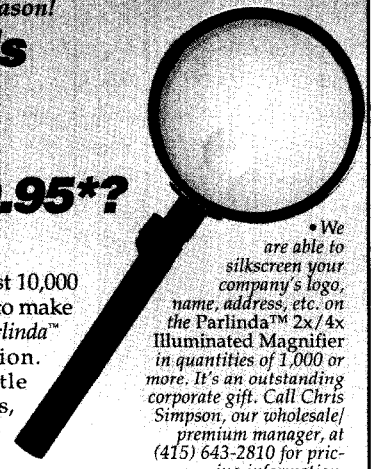

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hypothetical assumption that humans are 10 times more sensitive than any lab animal; and then, they divided the new safe amount by 10 again, guided by another unfounded assumption, that some humans might for whatever reason be 10 times more sensitive than that. Divide that number by 10 again, and we have the amount of pesticide residue the EPA, under the Food Quality Protection Act, now concludes kids can safely consume. That level of residue is a thousandfold less than the minimum that could cause possible harm. According to a Harvard Center for Risk Analysis study, the actual amount of pesticide that we are exposed to has been overestimated "by factors of 99,000 to 463,000."

Other aspects of the Food Quality Protection Act—the law itself, not just its implementation—almost guarantee more future pesticide restrictions. First, the law's "reasonable certainty of no harm" standard can be interpreted to mean that so long as it is theoretically conceivable that any level of pesticide, however microscopic, might cause harm, it must be judged harmful. Second, the law requires the EPA take into consideration not only pesticides found on food, but pesticides found on non-food sources to calculate safe levels of exposure, thus holding food providers responsible for other sources of pesticide. Third, the Food Quality Protection Act limits the EPA from taking into account any benefits that result from using pesticides, such as more abundant and cheaper fruits and vegetables.

BLAMING BUREAUCRATS AT THE EPA FOR BAD LAWMAKING ABSOLVES BOTH CONGRESS AND INTEREST GROUPS FROM FACING UP TO THEIR OWN COMPLICITY.

The truth of the matter is: There is no evidence at all that anyone anywhere gets ill because of pesticides in their food. Certainly, ingesting pesticides straight can sicken or kill you. But the idea that anyone, kid or adult, is actually harmed by the tiny amounts found in their food is pure fantasy. Carol Browner, the head of the EPA, admitted as much when announcing the new restrictions, saying that though we enjoy "the safest, most abundant food supply in the world—foods can be made even safer." Never mind, as neither Congress nor environmental activists do, that food naturally contains pesticides, some of them potentially cancer-causing, in greater amounts than humans add. The EPA operates on the simplistic assumption that whatever's organic is good and whatever's man-made is bad.

Now, the radical logic of the Food Quality Protection Act has made it the object of litigation. The National Resources Defense Council along with the Breast Cancer Fund, the California Public Interest Research Group, the United Farm Workers of America, and others are suing the EPA for not carrying out the legislation as required. The EPA has not, according to the plaintiffs, finished reviewing the permitted tolerance levels for the worst of the commonly used pesticides.

From the opposite direction, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the American Crop Protection Association have also filed a suit, claiming the EPA is using too little real-world data about the dangers of pesticide exposure. Once again, carelessly crafted legislation leads to massive litigation, and the final decision about a law's actual real-world effects is bounced from Congress to the courts. Rep. Richard Pombo of California has crafted a bill with over 160 co-sponsors that would require the EPA to use more real data to analyze the effect its restrictions might have on farmers, but no one is close to admitting that the legislation was a mistake.

How did the the Food Quality Protection Act ever become law, let alone be celebrated? Its great virtue was that it did away with the hated Delaney Clause, which prohibited any detectable level of cancer-causing agents in processed foods. New technologies make it possible to detect cancer-causing agents at infinitesimally smaller levels than when Delaney was enacted. The Food Quality Protection Act, by comparison, applies one "reasonable certainty of no harm" approach to all foods, and thus does not tether the EPA's judgments on acceptable pesticide levels to any empirical standard. This allows bureaucrats to conceive of, and work toward, some never-never land where pesticide use has disappeared.

But blaming bureaucrats for bad lawmaking absolves both Congress and interest groups from facing up to their own complicity in the rushed passage of the Food Quality Protection Act, which took less than two weeks to make it from subcommittee to the White House. Obviously, many of the congressmen who are now eager to amend the law didn't really understand its significance when they voted for it in 1996. At least one interested party, a farm industry lobbyist, is willing to admit that he dropped the ball. "We were brain-dead that day," he says. "It was a great blunder."

Brian Doherty is the Warren Brookes fellow in environmental journalism at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

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America's Leading Conservative

The Triumph of Justice Clarence Thomas

By Andrew Peyton Thomas

Clarence Thomas is conservatism's man of the decade and everything his enemies feared he would become. After taking some of the hardest, lowest blows ever delivered by the Left, he could easily have crumbled or compromised when he joined the Supreme Court in 1991. Instead, he held his ground. Eight years after his confirmation, Thomas is the most steadfast conservative on the Court. To both of the philosophical camps that battled so fiercely over his nomination, Thomas has shown that he was worth the fight.

Today, conservatives admire Thomas for the moral courage he has displayed, both in his confirmation hearings and in the case law he has authored. Many also see him as a tragic figure, a man whose views, combined with his race, doomed him to a nationally televised humiliation. Yet the manner in which he endured that fate calls to mind the observation that misfortune nobly borne is good fortune. What is often overlooked, furthermore, is the extent of his ultimate triumph. Except for Ronald Reagan, Clarence Thomas is arguably the only major figure in recent American public life to have collided full force with the liberal establishment and emerged the stronger. Newt Gingrich and Kenneth Starr, for example, fared far worse. Thomas, by contrast, can survey the wreckage of political and ideological actors whose encounter with him left them reduced in credibility and power.

Consider feminists and liberal black organizations, the most formidable interest groups to oppose his confirmation. Both were at the acme of their political influence when the hearings began. Both now are in obvious decline, in part because of the fight they picked with Thomas. Feminist leaders held up Anita Hill's dubious last-minute accusations of sexual harassment as establishing a standard that would henceforth disqualify boorish men from high office. Yet the same feminists now apologize for a president whose twenty years of gross sexual misconduct make Hill's assertions look more trivial than ever. This hypocrisy is not lost on the public—and how could it be, when feminists made the Thomas hearings so memorable?

Old-guard civil rights leaders similarly elevated the Thomas hearings, making them—along with the Rodney King riots and the O.J. Simpson trial—one of the defining events of the decade in race relations. But in the end, a majority of blacks supported Thomas's confirmation. In working so feverishly to ruin Thomas, grand old civil rights groups like the NAACP appeared intolerant and hidebound. In the process, they squandered much good will among blacks and whites alike.

Thomas prevailed for the same reason he now prospers on the Court. Instead of buckling or appeasing his adversaries, he defiantly called the proceedings what they manifestly were—a "high-tech lynching"—and dared his foes to take their best shot. They did, and he still stands. A weaker man might have been forever intimidated by this clash; history would have remembered him merely as a martyr of the culture wars, a sort of Nathan Hale of modern conservatism. Not Clarence Thomas. In his speeches across the country and, most important, in his jurisprudence, Thomas has staked a credible claim to being nothing less than the leading conservative in America today.

With the Cold War behind us, the most momentous political battles of our time occur in the judiciary, an arena liberals have dominated for 40 years. Those who would carry the conservative banner in the judicial arena need not only guts but a spirit of rebellion. Thomas has both in abundance. Indeed, the critics who insisted on closely scrutinizing his "temperament" during the confirmation process were onto something, for temperament can serve as a rough surrogate for character. His opponents rightly feared a

Andrew Peyton Thomas is an attorney in Phoenix and the co-author of Reggie White's new book Fighting the Good Fight.

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jurist whose commitment to conservative principles was unyielding.

Throughout his life, Thomas had shown the very independence and integrity they dreaded. He grew up black and Catholic in rural Georgia. He matured into a man zealous enough to train for the priesthood, yet autonomous enough to drop out of both the seminary and the Catholic Church after overhearing a white seminarian delight in the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Thomas defied the poverty and racism of his youth by attending college in the northeast, at Holy Cross and Yale Law School. His first job out of law school was working for the Republican attorney general of Missouri, John Danforth; he later served in two high-profile posts in the Reagan administration. Thomas, in short, was not a likely recruit for People for the American Way.

As a black conservative lawyer, Thomas challenged his foes' hegemony over the judicial branch. It is hard for whites to appreciate the courage required of blacks who, like Thomas, defy the reigning orthodoxy of their group. Four centuries of organized subjugation in North America have made black Americans almost uniquely cohesive. For a black lawyer to oppose the old-line civil rights establishment—which still pretends to the leadership of black America—means professional and personal ostracism. For Thomas, it meant being stamped "Uncle Thomas"; Jesse Jackson condemned him as a "traitor." The price rose higher still when the opponents of his confirmation set out publicly to mortify and destroy him.

Thomas was willing to pay this price because the alternative was philosophical surrender. A recurring theme of his speeches and court opinions is individuals' God-given right to think for themselves. Freedom of conscience, fount of the subsidiary rights in the First Amendment, is the liberty that Thomas seems to value above all others. In the most poignant speech of his career, delivered in July 1998 amid protests including a staged walk-out, Thomas told the mostly black National Bar Association that he had not come to defend his views. Rather, he had accepted the group's invitation to speak, despite the resulting controversy, in order "to assert my right to think for myself, to refuse to have my ideas assigned to me as though I was an intellectual slave because I'm black. I come to state that I am a man, free to think for myself and do as I please."

In his jurisprudence, Justice Thomas has revealed the extent of his own independence of mind—though you will not learn this from the media, who insist on diminishing him as one who merely follows the lead of Justice Antonin Scalia. Last May, a front-page article in the *Washington Post* repeated the mantra: "For the past eight years," asserted reporter Joan Biskupic, "Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has walked in the shadow of Antonin Scalia." In Thomas's early years, she explained, "he let Scalia hold the pen: Whatever their joint views, Scalia, 63, tended to write them up. Thomas, 50, merely signed on." Only recently, Biskupic said, has this subservience begun to wane.

A certain deference to like-minded fellow justices would be understandable in any freshman on the Court. The stubborn fact, however, is that this assertion about Thomas is untrue, yet another falsehood besmirching the black conservative who got away. From his very first term, he has written some of the Court's most impressive opinions of recent years.

Thomas offered an early taste of things to come in his dissenting opinion in *Hudson* v. *McMillian* (1992). This dissent, which Scalia joined, is one of the most devastating critiques of prisoners'-rights jurisprudence ever written. An inmate had brought suit over injuries inflicted by prison guards. A federal magistrate described these injuries as "minor." The majority voted to repeal the requirement that an inmate prove a "significant injury" before being able to sue for violation of the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Thomas excoriated the majority for warping the Constitution "beyond all bounds of history and precedent." He reminded them, "The Eighth Amendment is not, and should not be turned into, a National Code of Prison Regulation." For his opinion in *Hudson*, the *New York Times* branded Thomas "the youngest, cruelest justice."

In subsequent terms, Thomas has further established his identity as an independent thinker and the court's most rigorous conservative. In his first full term, 1992-93, Thomas joined Scalia in five concurring opinions, one dissent, and one opinion concurring in part and dissenting in part—a very small fraction of the 107 total cases that yielded full court opinions. Thomas wrote six concurrences of his own; and he wrote one dissent, which Scalia joined. Thomas was more likely to join Chief Justice William Rehnquist in dissent (twice) or other members of the court (thrice) than Scalia. In 81 of the 107 cases, Thomas voted with the majority, as did Scalia a comparable percentage of the time (Thomas wrote the majority opinion in 11 cases). By 1995, according to an analysis by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Thomas had become the second most prolific opinion writer on the court. He has authored some of the longest separate opinions in the history of the court, opinions that are sometimes longer than those of the majority.

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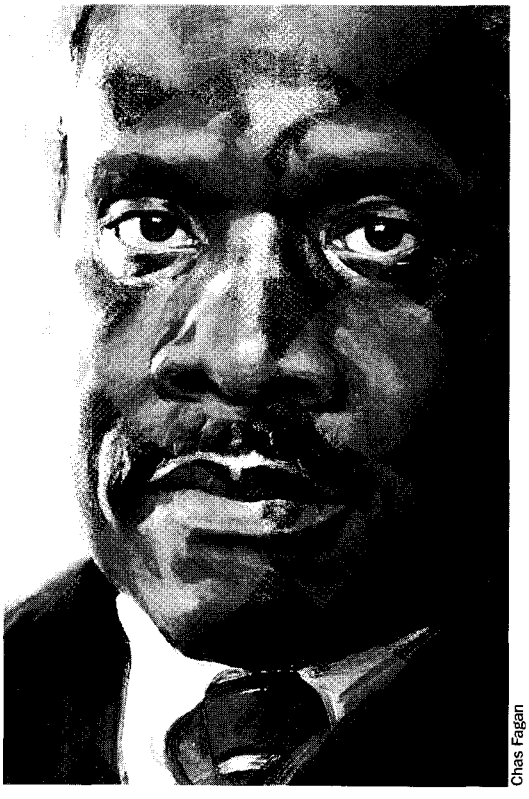
Thomas has been extraordinarily faithful to originalism, the theory that judges should abide by the original intentions of the Framers of the Constitution. Originalism typically squares off against the "living Constitution" theories of the Left, which hold that judges must update the Constitution by interpreting it in line with contemporary liberal theories of justice. In opposing the anti-democratic jurisprudence of the "living Constitution," originalism is really shorthand for commitment to the rule of law.

Thomas has been the court's most consistent originalist—more so than Scalia or Rehnquist. He also has been the most aggressive advocate of overturning liberal precedents, some of which are now many decades old. In *United States* v. *Lopez* (1995), for example, the High Court struck down the federal Gun-Free School Zones Act, which made it a federal offense to knowingly possess a firearm within a school zone. The Court held that the law exceeded Congress's authority to regulate under the commerce clause. This was the High Court's first departure from 60 years of rulings upholding the federal government's power to regulate the nation virtually as it pleases.


Chas Fagan

In a concurring opinion, Thomas complained that the majority in *Lopez* did not go far enough. He argued that the Court should consider returning to the commerce clause jurisprudence that held sway prior to the New Deal. He talked of the "wrong turn" made "in the 1930s from a century and a half of precedent." He added, "My review of the case law indicates that the substantial effects test [the liberal interpretation of the commerce clause] is but an innovation of the 20th century." Such a statement, penned on the eve of the 21st century, was a remarkable and—to conservatives—charming declaration.

In cases involving criminal justice, Thomas has urged the curtailing or overturning of criminals' rights invented by the Warren Court and subsequent court majorities. In his dissenting opinion in *Thompson* v. *Keohane* (1995), which Rehnquist joined, Thomas scolded the majority for its expansion of *Miranda* rights. Thomas concurred in Scalia's opinion in *Lewis* v. *Casey* (1996), which vacated a lower court's injunction micromanaging Arizona's prison law libraries. Yet Thomas used the occasion to call for scrapping altogether *Bounds* v. *Smith* (1977), the Burger Court ruling that created the bogus right to prison law libraries in the first place.

Last term, in *City of Chicago* v. *Morales* (1999), Thomas dissented from the majority's decision to invalidate a Chicago ordinance prohibiting gang members from loitering in public places. In an opinion joined by Rehnquist and Scalia, Thomas argued, "I fear that the Court has unnecessarily sentenced law-abiding citizens to lives of terror and misery." He denied flatly the majority's contention that the "asserted 'freedom to loiter for innocent purposes'" was "'deeply rooted in the Nation's history and tradition.'" Thomas went so far as to question the court's 1973 ruling in *Papachristou* v. *City of Jacksonville*, which overturned the nation's vagrancy laws.

In one area, civil rights, Thomas's originalism has been more complicated. This is a vexing realm of jurisprudence, for the inescapable reason that the Framers of the Constitution and, later, of the Fourteenth Amendment did not fully share our current commitment to racial equality. Here, Thomas has espoused the theory advanced by Professor Harry Jaffa of the Claremont Institute. Jaffa argues that the Constitution should be interpreted in light of the Declaration of Independence, notably its statement that "all men are created equal." In a Lincoln Day speech last February to a Claremont Institute gathering in Washington, Thomas repeatedly singled out Jaffa for his guiding work. Thomas is a firm believer in Jaffa's theory, presaged by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and accordingly has cited the Declaration as an authority in several opinions.

Even so, Thomas is scarcely a liberal activist in civil rights, and he continues to draw the ire of liberal black organizations. In a concurring opinion in *Mis-*

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souri v. *Jenkins* (1995), he became the first justice to criticize aspects of the landmark *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision directly, questioning the social science on which it famously relied. In *Adarand Constructors, Inc.* v. *Pena* (1995), which involved federal set-asides for minority contractors, the majority applied the strict-scrutiny standard to all government classifications based on race. Thomas hailed this decision in a concurring opinion that cited the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas's concurring opinion in *Holder* v. *Hall* (1994), which Scalia joined, exhorted the Court to roll back another liberal precedent, the 1986 ruling in *Thornburgh* v. *Gingles*. *Gingles* had begun the Court's descent into the quagmire of racial gerrymandering, holding that the Voting Rights Act guarantees not merely equal access to the ballot but also something approaching proportionate representation based on race.

In his concurrence in *Holder*, Thomas repeated his lifelong insistence that people should not be expected to "all think alike" simply because they belong to a given racial or ethnic group. In unusually strong language, he accused the court of acting like "Platonic guardians" and a "politburo" in prior civil rights cases. "In my view," he remonstrated, "our current practice should not continue. Not for another Term, not until the next case, not for another day."

How does Thomas compare with the court's other two conservatives? Rehnquist almost always can be counted on to resist further liberal judicial activism. But he has produced or signed onto very few opinions advocating the reversal of liberal precedents. Generally, he shows little stomach for the fight that such upheaval would provoke in the High Court and in American society. He remains a jurist with conservative instincts, but one whose veneration for precedent—even ill-begotten precedent—leads him to accept the leftward ratchet of the Court's recent jurisprudence.

Scalia, in contrast, has the temperament—that word again—of a conservative radical capable of leading a counterrevolution. A brilliant intellect and the best writer on the Court since Oliver Wendell Holmes, Scalia was blessed with all the mental tools necessary to spearhead a conservative rebellion against baleful precedent. Yet he has not gained acceptance in this role. There are several possible reasons. Unlike Thomas, whose opinions are spirited but not strident, Scalia clearly enjoys promulgating feisty opinions; he is loath to subordinate his wicked pen to something as uninspiring as collegiality. More fundamentally, Scalia has not been as consistent an originalist as Thomas.

Scalia has endorsed a doctrine of "plain meaning" for interpreting the Constitution. In practice, this has led to some quirky outcomes. In *Coy* v. *Iowa* (1988), for example, Scalia wrote the majority opinion in which the Court struck down an Iowa law permitting a screen to be placed at trial between an alleged pedophile and his two young accusers. The case pitted tough-on-crime sentiment versus concerns for genuine civil liberties, in this case the Sixth Amendment right to "confront" one's accuser at trial. But Scalia decided the case without even consulting the intentions of the Framers. Instead, he sought the plain meaning of "confront"—by parsing the Latin roots of the word and invoking authorities as diverse as Shakespeare and President Eisenhower's description of folkways in Abilene, Kansas. He ridiculed the dissent for finding Dean Wigmore's famous treatise on evidence more persuasive than these offbeat citations.

Scalia's First Amendment jurisprudence has also been puzzling. Before Thomas joined the Court, Scalia's rulings on the First Amendment could have been written by almost any Ivy League law professor. In 1989, Scalia joined the majority in *Texas* v. *Johnson* in finding a new constitutional right to burn flags. In the same year, he and Rehnquist voted to gut the law banning "dial-a-porn" telephone operations—an anti-historical ruling rightly condemned by Robert Bork, among others.

At least in regard to the First Amendment, which has generated jurisprudence greatly befouling the culture, Thomas's presence seems to have pricked Scalia's conscience. After Thomas joined the Court, Scalia's jurisprudence in this critical area began to move back toward originalism, or at least traditionalism. In *McIntyre* v. *Ohio Elections Commission* (1995) and *44 Liquormart, Inc.* v. *Rhode Island* (1996), Scalia stated that in interpreting the First Amendment, he would consult above all the "long accepted practices of the American people." This marked a dramatic break for Scalia, for such "long accepted practices" do not include any trendy right to burn flags.

In *McIntyre*, the state of Ohio had prohibited the distribution of anonymous literature in political campaigns, and had fined a person $100 for violating the law. The Supreme Court struck down the law on First Amendment grounds. Thomas joined the majority but filed a concurring opinion, in which he chastised the majority for its breezy history lessons. He criticized its reliance on Shakespeare, Mark Twain, and Voltaire in stitching together a constitutional history; "these are irrelevant to our analysis," he reminded the majority,

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"because [they shed] no light on what the phrases 'free speech' or 'free press' meant to the people who drafted and ratified the First Amendment." Thomas offered instead an impressive history of the treatment of anonymous pamphlets from the time of the Constitution's adoption, including a discussion of the many revolutionary and early U.S. tracts that conscripted the names of great Romans (Publius, Cato, Brutus, et al.) as noms de guerre. Thomas concluded that "after reviewing the weight of the historical evidence, it seems that the Framers understood the First Amendment to protect an author's right to express his thoughts on political candidates or issues in an anonymous fashion."

In a dissent joined by Rehnquist, Scalia said he would have upheld the Ohio law because there is no constitutional right to anonymous electioneering. He centered his opinion not on the "plain meaning" of the First Amendment but on tradition: He defended the law by noting that similar regulations exist in every state except California, and they have a "pedigree dating back to the end of the 19th century." Proving that "anonymous electioneering was used frequently is not to establish that it was a constitutional right," he conceded. He added, however, "A governmental practice that has become general throughout the United States, and particularly one that has the validation of long, accepted usage, bears a strong presumption of constitutionality."

IN THEIR FIRST AMENDMENT SKIRMISHES, THOMAS HAS EFFACED ANY PERCEPTION THAT HE IS A CLONE OF SCALIA.

The problem with Scalia's treatment, as Thomas recognized, is that such statutes date back only one hundred years, not to the framing of the First Amendment. Still, Scalia's dissent proffered extensive legal history, erected good guideposts for future decisions, and rightly questioned the validity of a new right that could have been envisioned and protected explicitly at the time of the framing.

And what of the long-standing laws against flag-burning, which, under Scalia's reasoning in *McIntyre*, seemingly should have been upheld rather than swept away? Scalia was honest and humble enough to deal directly with this discrepancy. But the strained distinction he drew in his dissent—he maintained that the "bedrock principle" at the heart of the First Amendment safeguarded flag-burning but not anonymous pamphleteering—did not seem to persuade even him. By any reasonable measure, political literature is far more central to freedom of speech than flag-burning, and flag-burning is hardly a tradition of long standing. In short, Scalia was implicitly forced by Thomas to reckon with a blunder in his own earlier jurisprudence.

Without Thomas, Scalia's public soul-searching in this important area of the law simply would not have happened. Thomas forced Scalia to confront his missteps by authoring an opinion that held up Scalia's contradictory views in stark terms. Scalia, in his concurring opinion in *44 Liquormart*, cited his dissent in *McIntyre* the previous year, proclaiming: "I will take my guidance as to what the Constitution forbids, with regard to a text as indeterminate as the First Amendment's preservation of 'the freedom of speech,' and where the core offense of suppressing particular political ideas is not at issue, from the long accepted practices of the American people." Granted, Scalia's straining continued. But in these First Amendment skirmishes, Thomas has effaced any perception that he is a clone of Scalia. In fact, the opposite is true: He has nudged Scalia back toward the conservative fold.

To be sure, there have been instances when Thomas has departed from originalism. He joined the majority in *Reno* v. *ACLU* (1997), which unanimously struck down the Communications Decency Act, a federal law prohibiting transmission of obscene or indecent communications over the Internet to children, on First Amendment grounds. Thomas is a staunch defender of commercial free speech, and perhaps this tendency, combined with his passion for liberty, motivated his decision. Whatever his reasons, this holding was divorced from the relevant constitutional history.

But perfection is not an attribute of human justice. Over the last eight years, Clarence Thomas has been the Court's most faithful and valiant defender of the intent of the Framers. In this, he has proved himself uniquely qualified to be the next chief justice, should a Republican president select Rehnquist's successor. To honor the intentions of long-deceased leaders is normally an act of humility. In this age, however, when liberal precedents of relatively recent vintage flout the nation's older traditions, defenders of the Constitution are forced to rebel, combining humility with boldness. Clarence Thomas has been doing this all his life, without wavering or complaint. In the process, he has emerged as a man of unbreakable character and our greatest public servant. ♦

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DISHONORING THE BOY SCOUTS

There's No Merit in the New Jersey Court's Decision

By Larry P. Arnn

On August 4, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America is a "public accommodation" that must admit homosexuals as adult Scout leaders. Here is legal force used to attack one of the oldest and finest youth charities in our country. That is the bad news. But there's good news, too: The decision opens the way for two important victories—about which more later—if the good sense can be found to pursue them.

This is the first time that a state's top court has held Scouting to be a public accommodation. The line of reasoning in the case traduces both the Boy Scouts and its principles. If it is sustained, it will compromise Scouting, liberty, and morality alike. The Jersey justices pretend that they do little at all, while they work a revolution.

The case arose over the situation of one James Dale. Dale grew up to be an Eagle Scout. Then he became a volunteer Scout leader. Then he went to Rutgers and became leader of the gay student group. His picture and a story about his homosexual activism appeared in the Rutgers newspaper. The Monmouth, New Jersey, Scout council dismissed him from service as a volunteer leader. This being America, litigation began, which has made its way through trial, appeal, and now the state Supreme Court. The Boy Scouts hope that the case will soon be before the United States Supreme Court.

The New Jersey court ruled that Dale must be readmitted as a Scout leader under the state's law against discrimination. It offered two grounds for the finding that Scouting is a "public accommodation." First, it is large, advertises widely for members, celebrates openness and inclusion, and has influence. Second, nothing in its creed or practice carries any particular moral meaning, or is devoted to anything that can really be called religion. Never mind that Scouting thinks, and has always thought, differently. Their Honors know better.

The chief justice wrote the opinion of the court. The core of it transforms Scouting's devotion to "moral fitness" into simple relativism: "Although one of BSA's stated purposes is to encourage members' ethical development, BSA does not endorse any specific set of moral beliefs. Instead, 'moral fitness' is deemed an individual choice." Her Honor extracts this sunbeam, not from a cucumber as in Swift, but from a fine passage in the *Boy Scout Handbook* that speaks of a Scout's duty to follow his conscience. When the Scouts encourage a boy to follow his conscience, the justices interpret this to mean that whatever the boy thinks is right is indeed right. They seem not to know that conscience cannot speak on both sides of a moral question, there being good conscience and bad conscience. Acts can be "unconscionable." Scouting is built upon this distinction. The Jersey justices do not seem to know it, which is a commentary on our time.

The absurdities of this opinion justify, these justices think, the conclusion that the Boy Scouts stand for nothing in particular. This in turn prepares the way for the conclusion that Scouting is a public accommodation. In fact, the Scouts have never held out a sign to say that the public may enter. First of all, only boys may enter. Second, only those boys may enter who will take the Scouts' Oath and follow the Scouts' Law. Other boys are excluded on the ground that they cannot pursue the central good that Scouting has to impart. The justices note that few boys are in fact ever excluded. That is true because everyone knows what Scouting is for, and those who do not like it do not apply or soon drop out. Until recently, both manners and good sense prevented people from joining Scouting merely for the purpose of changing it.

The moral teaching of Scouting is illustrated in James Dale's own experience, if the justices would but look there. His rise through Scouting was guided by the ninth edition of the *Official Boy Scout Handbook*, issued in 1979 (the 11th edition was issued this year). Dale has every reason to know the contents of this handbook because Scouts are required to carry it with them on most Scouting events. The introduction calls the handbook a Scout's "dog-eared companion"

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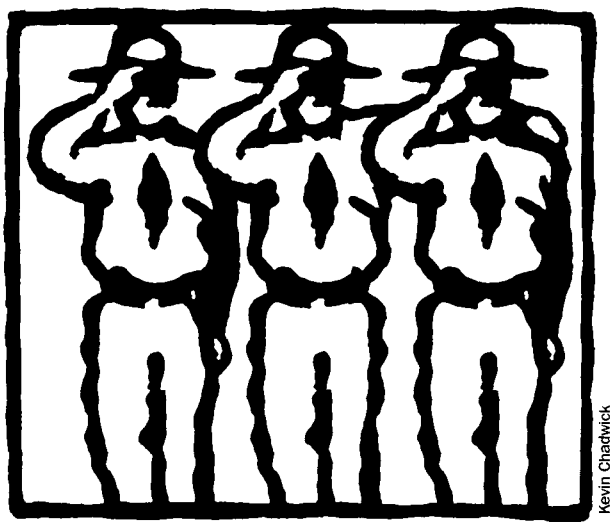
through life. It also contains the passage: "When you live up to the trust of fatherhood your sex life will fit into God's wonderful plan of creation. Fuller understanding of wholesome sex behavior can bring you lifelong happiness. A moment of so-called sexual freedom can turn into a lifetime of regrets" (p. 526; the following page begins with the heading "Once a Scout, Always a Scout"). Whatever the New Jersey judges may think of Scouting, Dale says today that Scouting was good for him and he admires it. He has every reason to know every moral teaching important to Scouting. His attack upon Scouting is therefore a breach of faith.

But getting back to the potentially good news in this New Jersey decision, it is of two kinds. The more immediate concerns Scouting itself. It has been subjected to more than a decade of legal expense and strife from defending itself against lawsuits from atheists, women's groups, and homosexuals. The national Scouting organization has approached these suits with discipline and patience. It has done whatever it could to keep them from affecting its work of helping boys (that work is thriving). The New Jersey case opens the way for a final decision at the United States Supreme Court. This is urgently needed, for one thing because Scouting will be a house divided if the New Jersey decision stands. Scouting works rather as American government is supposed to work under the Constitution: Most activity is local, but there is effective guidance from principles set forth in writing that are national and from a small but significant national governing body. The appeal of this New Jersey decision will be one of the most important cases to come before the Supreme Court in many years.


Kevin Chadwick

The second good that could stem from this decision concerns the popular branches of government. Congress has direct power, under section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment, to repair injuries against rights that are worked by state governments. Scouting and each person involved in it are deprived by this decision of fundamental liberties. Congressman Canady of the Constitution Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee has been ready to invoke Congress's power when the time is right. There can be a "Defense of the Boy Scouts Act."

As for the executive branch, the presidential campaign will drag it into the Scouting controversy. So far the presidential race is a contest between two frontrunners, each seeking to establish himself as the better family man. Al Gore no less than George Bush, and George Bush no less than Elizabeth Dole and Gary Bauer, seeks to establish credentials in the area of "values." In his announcement speech, Gore said: "Seven years ago, we needed to put America back to work—and we did. Now we must build on that foundation. We must make family life work in America." If for Clinton it was the economy, for Gore it is the family, stupid.

It is not, of course, the job of the federal government to make the family work. And yet at the same time, the nature of the family is connected to the nature of man, and therefore to the nature of rights. To reach in politics the fundamental issue of family, one must connect it to things that are inherently political. The New Jersey case, in its errant reasoning, attempts and fails at this. Al Gore, when he endorses the platform of political homosexuality, attempts and fails at this. Given the variability of human circumstances, the family may indeed take many forms; but each form must be judged by the standard of the family in nature, and none that contradicts that standard will lead to the larger happiness of children or society. Nor can any that contradicts that standard can provide the basis of a right.

George Bush, Steve Forbes, Elizabeth Dole, and Gary Bauer may all have been boosted by the straw poll in Iowa. They can do their country no better service than to answer these attempts to divorce family and sex from their larger purpose in fatherhood and motherhood. If they complete this task, politics can then be about something both fundamental and political. If our rights are grounded in the nature of man, then those rights can be fixed and definite, and government can be limited and just. And the Boy Scouts can be free to assist the family in its natural and essential work. ♦

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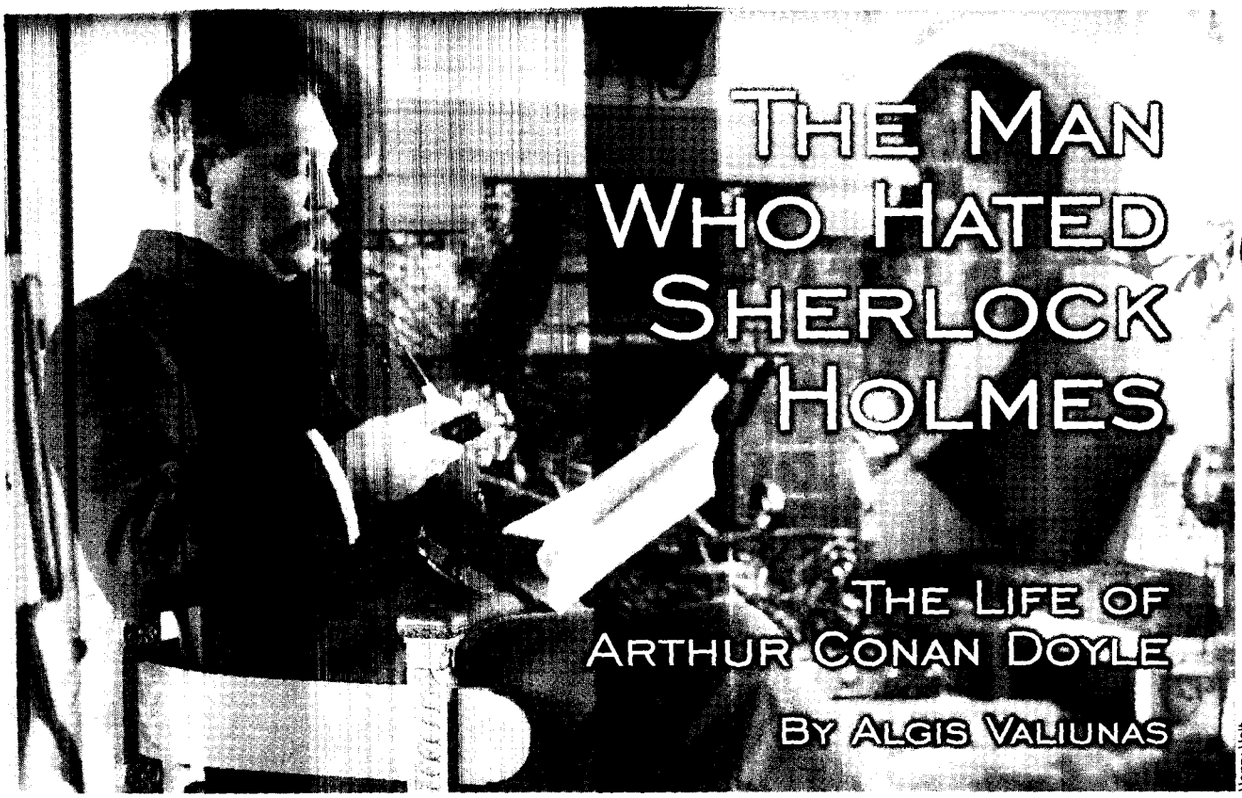

The Man Who Hated Sherlock Holmes

The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle

By Algis Valiunas

Henry Holt

Comedians, beautiful women, and the writers of popular fiction all suffer from the same affliction: a yearning to be taken seriously. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was born in 1859, wanted above all to be considered a serious writer, and it was no consolation that he had created the most enduring character of modern literature. Sherlock Holmes is the winning child whom everyone loves except his father. "I believe," Conan Doyle once sadly wrote, "that if I had never touched Holmes, who has tended to obscure my higher work, my position in literature would at the present moment be a more commanding one."

Serious writers—the ones who actually occupied the commanding position Doyle envied—recognized that Holmes was extraordinary, though their wonder was tinged with condescension toward his creator. In *Ulysses*, James Joyce transmogrified the detective's name into a loopy verb: "He had been meantime taking stock of the individual in front of him and Sherlockholmesing him up." George Bernard Shaw numbered Holmes among the three most famous men who ever lived (along with Jesus Christ and Houdini). T.S. Eliot remarked, "Perhaps the greatest of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries is this: that when we talk of him we invariably fall into the fancy of his existence"—and as for Arthur Conan Doyle, "what has he to do with Holmes?"

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Most of the detective's admirers agree. Near the author's Edinburgh birthplace stands a statue of Holmes—and not Doyle. There have been more than twenty Holmes plays, well over a hundred Holmes movies, numerous television shows, a Broadway musical, and a ballet. John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, and Orson Welles collaborated on a recording of Holmes's best stories. The detective's face has appeared on a series of British postage stamps, and illustrations of his cases decorate the London Underground's Baker Street station. At least fifty authors since Doyle's death in 1930 have published additional Holmes cases, as though Doyle himself were incidental to the whole business.

DANIEL STASHOWER
Teller of Tales
The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle
Henry Holt, 472 pp., $32.50

Daniel Stashower, Doyle's latest biographer, stops short of portraying his subject as "The Man Who Hated Sherlock Holmes." But he does make it clear that Doyle thought little of Holmes—and accordingly, there is little of Holmes in Stashower's *Teller of Tales*. Just as Holmes has a life apart from Doyle, so Doyle lived a remarkable life quite apart from his most famous creation. "I have had a life which, for variety and romance, could, I think, hardly be exceeded," Doyle wrote, and this new biography proves the swagger justified.

Arthur Conan Doyle was born into a family of Irish descent and some distinction; his grandfather John Doyle had been the foremost political caricaturist of his time, and three of his uncles are mentioned in the *Dictionary of National Biography*: a historian, an artist, and the director of the National Gallery in Dublin. Doyle's father, however, was a wreck—a surveyor whose alcoholism kept his family in poverty and who ended up in a madhouse. The boy's wealthy uncles paid for his education at Jesuit schools in England and Austria, where he excelled in sports.

He then went on to study medicine at Edinburgh University, where he came under the influence of Dr. Joseph Bell, the model for Holmes, a surgeon who astonished his students with uncanny displays of observation and deduction. But the craving for adven-

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Henry Holt

One of the infamous "Cottingley Fairy Photographs" Doyle defended.

ture and the need for money prompted Doyle to interrupt his medical studies and sign aboard an Arctic whaler as a twenty-year-old ship's surgeon.

His medical duties were not demanding, and, wanting to do what the real men did, he volunteered to help hunt for seals and whales. Once, off on his own, he fell into the frigid water. Desperately reaching up for the seal carcass he had been skinning, he pulled himself slowly back onto the ice; but as he was inching his way up, the seal was sliding down, and if it too fell into the water, he knew he would die. Doyle just made it to safety, and the brush with death, he was convinced, made a man of him.

After a seven-month voyage, he returned to Edinburgh and got his degree before enlisting for another stint as ship's doctor, this time aboard a steamer on the Liverpool-West Africa route. After three months—and a bout with malaria, a crocodile hunt, a near miss with a shark, and a fire on the ship—he returned to look for prospects closer to home.

His prominent London uncles offered their assistance; they knew the best Roman Catholic families, and the right introductions would be invaluable for a doctor just establishing his practice. But Doyle had abandoned the Catholic faith, and he would struggle for nine years to make a success of his medical career.

His real gifts, however, lay elsewhere. Between patients and after hours, he began to write: stories of the Arctic and Africa; a novel about an Edinburgh medical student, *The Firm of Girdlestone*; the first Sherlock Holmes novella, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887); a novel about seventeenth-century Puritans, *Micah Clarke* (1888); a chivalric romance, *The White Company* (1891); another Holmes novella, *The Sign of the Four*, which he knocked off in a month, stealing the time from his writing of *The White Company*.

Then in 1891 he hit upon the idea of doing a series of short stories about Sherlock Holmes. He quickly turned out one story after another for a popular new magazine, the *Strand*, and collected the first dozen in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Acclaim and money greeted his efforts; he gave up medicine to devote himself to writing—and not about Holmes. Historical fiction, "less remunerative but . . . more ambitious from a literary point of view," was his higher calling, and in short order he produced a novel about the Huguenots and another about Napoleon, which enjoyed nothing like his Holmes success.

So, when in 1893 the *Strand* offered him £1,000 for twelve more Holmes stories, Doyle took on the job. But in the last of those stories, he deliberately signaled the end of his patience, sending Holmes plunging to his death off the Reichenbach Falls in the grip of the dastardly Professor Moriarty.

England mourned, often angrily. Holmes devotees wore black bands on their sleeves; twenty thousand readers canceled their subscriptions to the *Strand*; a celebrated cartoon portrayed a teary boy reading the last Holmes story in bed, devastated by "Life's Darkest Moment"; a distraught lady attacked Doyle in the street with her handbag.

The author maintained that the detective's death had been "justifiable homicide," and he turned his hand to projects he considered more worthy. In time, however, he relented: Holmes surfaced again in 1902, with *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (set prior to the detective's death), and the novel's immense popularity induced the *Strand* and the American *Collier's Weekly* to offer Doyle extravagant sums for more. Resurrection swiftly followed, and by the time Doyle was finished with Holmes in 1927, he had written four novels and fifty-six short stories starring the detective.

Sitting alone in a room and imagining the exploits of daring men, the author longed to be a daring man himself. When the Boer War broke out in 1899, he tried to enlist, wanting to set an example, as he believed he had "perhaps the strongest influence over young men, especially athletic sporting men, of any one in England (bar Kipling)." The Army told him he was too old and too fat to fight, but he went as a doctor, heroically battling the South African typhoid epidemic under frightful conditions.

"It was difficult to associate him with the author of Sherlock Holmes," a newspaper account declared of the impassioned Dr. Doyle, and his passion stayed with him after his return home. He published a best-selling history of the Boer War, and, in a sixty-thousand-word pamphlet written in a single week, he defended the British Army from charges of barbarism. He even stood unsuccessfully for Parliament as a pro-war Liberal Unionist, and he was knighted in 1902 for his wartime service. Tempted to spurn the honor, which "big men" like Kipling had no use for, Doyle finally gave in to his mother's insistence that he accept.

Such meekness was an anomaly. Another bid for a seat in Parliament ended in defeat, but not ingloriously. In 1906, Doyle discovered the plight of George Edalji, a young Indian lawyer from the Midlands convicted of mutilat-

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ing livestock and of forging threatening letters to himself and his family. Certain of Edalji's innocence, Doyle wrote numerous letters to the newspapers, followed by a fervid pamphlet. Thanks to his involvement, the case soon became a national scandal. The papers all said it was as though Sherlock Holmes had rushed to Edalji's side. In the end, a special government commission cleared Edalji of the animal mutilations but not of the forgeries, much to Doyle's dismay.

In 1909, Doyle wrote *The Crime of the Congo*, again at white heat, assailing the horrors that the imperial regime of Belgium's King Leopold II inflicted in Africa—"the greatest crime which has ever been committed in the history of the world." Roger Casement, a British diplomat, Irish-born, who had spent twenty years in the Congo, goaded Doyle into action, and their cause became a bond of affection between the two men.

But in 1916, Casement was found guilty of soliciting German help for the Irish uprising and was sentenced to death. Doyle was sure that so good a man as Casement could never have committed treason unless he had gone insane, and on that ground he launched a campaign seeking leniency for his friend. Casement was hanged all the same, and Doyle's defense of Casement probably cost him a place in the House of Lords.

There were plenty of other projects that engaged Doyle—from divorce law reform to an English Channel tunnel—but the public role that he is best known for is his apostleship of spiritualism. The creator of the reasoning mechanism that is Sherlock Holmes came to believe in spooks and fairies, and the widespread public response was not unexpected: Sherlock Holmes had gone barking mad.

As early as 1887, Conan Doyle displayed an interest in spiritualism, and he joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1893. He attended séances, investigated reports of ghostly activity, and was persuaded that the dead can communicate with the living. It was not until 1917, however, that he announced his conviction publicly. The timing was crucial: Everyone had lost loved ones in the Great War; Doyle's nephew, his wife's brother, his sister's husband were killed in combat, and his son Kingsley, weakened by battle wounds, would die of influenza; the dead were constantly in every British citizen's thoughts. Witnessing the losses and the grief, Doyle wrote,

> I seemed suddenly to see that this subject with which I had so long dallied was not merely a study of a force outside the rules of science, but that it was really something tremendous, a breaking down of the walls between two worlds, a direct undeniable message from beyond, a call of hope and of guidance to the human race at the time of its deepest affliction.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Popperfoto/Archive Photos

There were, of course, charlatans who preyed on that affliction. But not even repeated revelations of flummery could disenchant Doyle. Stashower does his best to treat his subject's convictions respectfully, but he cannot resist the conclusion that they were colored by self-delusion and even dishonesty.

Self-delusion did the most harm. Doyle's credulity could be embarrassing, even to other spiritualists. In 1922, he wrote *The Coming of the Fairies*, in which he recounted the discovery two girls had made that there were fairies living near their Yorkshire village; the girls had even taken photographs, which Doyle pronounced irrefutable proof.

Stashower reproduces one of the photographs in his book, and it proves only that Doyle was far gone. In 1997, Doyle and the girls were dramatized in the movie *Fairy Tale*, a self-proclaimed "true story" starring Peter O'Toole. But, in fact, the women who in their girlhood had taken the pictures admitted their fraud in 1982, saying that they hadn't disclosed the truth to Doyle because they had felt sorry for him: He was old and had lost his son, and he seemed to find comfort in the fantasies. A few days before his death of heart failure in 1930, he wrote, "The reader will judge that I have had many adventures. The greatest and most glorious of all awaits me now."

"Conan Doyle Dies of Sherlock Holmes Fame," a New York newspaper headline read. Fatal though it might have been to Conan Doyle, Holmes's fame is itself undying, and one wishes Stashower had paused in *Teller of Tales* to consider why. For Holmes is a very strange hero—not the sort of man a reader would want to be or can really even imagine being. He is principally a hero of disinterested and all but disembodied mind. As Dr. Watson puts it in "A Scandal in Bohemia," Holmes is "the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen." In Holmes's own words, "I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix."

Holmes's mind is furnished like nobody else's. He has set about learning everything that might bear upon his profession, and he knows all there is to know about 140 types of tobacco ash ("It was an Indian cigar, of the variety which are rolled in Rotterdam"), tattoos ("That trick of staining the fishes' scales of a delicate pink is quite peculiar to China"), human ears ("In last year's *Anthropological Journal* you will find two short monographs from my pen upon the subject"), perfumes, footprints, and the way a man's work affects the shape of his hand.

Yet what Holmes doesn't know is as remarkable as what he does. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson is staggered to find Holmes has never heard of Copernicus. After Watson explains to him how the planets revolve around the sun, Holmes states that, now he has learned that happy fact, he will promptly forget it: The brain has only so much room, and he remembers strictly the facts he needs.

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In later stories, however, he unrolls a formidable erudition that has no apparent connection to his work. He bends Watson's ear with talk of miracle plays, medieval pottery, Stradivarius violins—he is a violinist and composer—Buddhism, and the warships of the future. In "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot," he casually delivers a two-hour disquisition on Cornish archaeology.

The aspects of character that attend Holmes's genius are both fascinating and repellent. He treats his own body with noble indifference, working himself to exhaustion, sometimes not eating for days when he is on the chase: "The faculties become refined when you starve them." And Holmes's mental faculties oversee the development of the moral ones. Virtue operates from the head down, and Holmes always keeps a cool head under fire.

With such strengths, however, come notable weaknesses. Holmes is prone to boredom, and when he gets bored he injects himself with a seven-percent solution of cocaine. Watson deplores this indulgence, but understands the need for it: Holmes's drug use is "a protest against the monotony of existence when cases are scanty and the papers uninteresting." Things that interest most people hold no appeal for Holmes. Love, indeed sexual desire of any form, is a distraction Holmes will have no part of. At the end of *The Sign of the Four*, when Watson tells him he is going to marry Holmes's client, Miss Mary Morstan, the detective lets out "a most dismal groan." He acknowledges that Miss Morstan is a charming young woman, but "love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things."

Holmes is not Doyle's only macrocephalic and great-hearted hero. Professor George Challenger, who appears in such science fiction as *The Lost World* (1912) and *The Poison Belt* (1913), has the biggest head that Ned Malone—Challenger's Watson—has ever seen, and force of mind gives Challenger, like Holmes, an enviable vitality. Boldness of thought makes them daring in action, and it is such action that Doyle ultimately esteems over intelligence. Watson describes himself "tingling with that half-sporting, half-intellectual pleasure" that he always feels when he joins Holmes on an adventure. Holmes and Challenger wield the intellect, while the reader gawks, as at feats of strength.

Doyle created heroes who made thinking seem as exciting as anything a man can do. And yet, for all the brainpower on display, Doyle's thinking heroes rarely give the reader anything to think about. Indeed, the real point of the adventures is to give the reader a break from thinking. In the preface to *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*, the final volume of Holmes stories, Doyle hopes he has given his audience "that distraction from the worries of life and stimulating change of thought which can only be found in the fairy kingdom of romance."

And whatever claims Doyle might make for the seriousness of his "higher work," it really is pitched at the same level as the Holmes stories. Doyle's own favorite among his many books, *The White Company*, is the story of a fourteenth-century youth who is raised in a monastery but who leaves it to find out where in the world he really belongs. The book is a long testimonial to duty, honor, country, glory, and romantic love—all of which wither at Doyle's touch. Action abounds, yet no life stirs. It is at last merely a boy's book with pretensions, an exercise in the higher puerility, and a leaden one, at that.

It would scald Arthur Conan Doyle to hear it, but inventing Sherlock Holmes was the best thing he did. Holmes is an institution: the thinking hero modern readers have instead of Socrates. That might sound like more bad news for modern times, but it is not, in fact, entirely so. After one has forgotten who killed whom or who stole what and how and why—and when one reads the Holmes canon end to end, the adventures rapidly become a blur—Holmes lives, a glowing intelligence devoted to a noble purpose.

"In a modest way I have combated evil," Holmes avers, and Doyle's problem was to find actions and themes big enough for his character. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is his triumph, with its discovery that some apparently supernatural evil is of human devising after all, raising the question whether that makes the world less frightening or more.

Perhaps it is Holmes's experience of the world's evil that changes him. When Watson first meets Holmes, the doctor notes that the detective has absolutely no reading knowledge of philosophy and no practical knowledge of gardening; when Holmes retires to a small farm in Sussex years later, "his time is divided between philosophy and agriculture." If only Watson had thought to ask his friend what he spent his leisure thinking about—then he might have had a real tale to tell. ♦

The Last Victorian

Nirad Chaudhuri, 1897-1999

By David Pryce-Jones

Nirad Chaudhuri was a scholar and artist, an exile, a man with a tragic view of life but also a comedian, in every way a free spirit. Just five feet tall, he filled the room with the solar energy of his extraordinary personality. He was rightly proud to publish a book at the age of 100, and up to the last days before his death on August 1 at age 101, he was still reading and writing and listening to great music.

He was born in Kishorganj, a village in Bengal, in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, just in time to see the British Empire in its heroic mode as ruler of a sixth of the globe and with a self-imposed duty to see that all its

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subjects would be free and equal under the rule of law. Bengali, Sanskrit, and Prakrit were the languages of his own culture. But as a boy, according to his memoirs, he used to wander along the banks of the local river declaiming in English the speeches of Edmund Burke, the poems of Matthew Arnold, and even Nelson's message to the Trafalgar fleet: "England expects every man will do his duty." Then he decided he had to learn French, to read Rémy de Gourmont and Sorel. And German too, for Ernst Bernheim's *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*.

In Calcutta he attended university, afterwards finding a job as a clerk. The engine of Indian nationalism was gathering steam. Chaudhuri took a look at Gandhi and Nehru, and did not care for the power-hungry politicians he saw. No longer quite Indian but not quite English either, they were, in his eyes, creatures of mimicry and make-believe rather than authentic representatives. Their success, he feared, would only set Hindu and Muslim against one another.

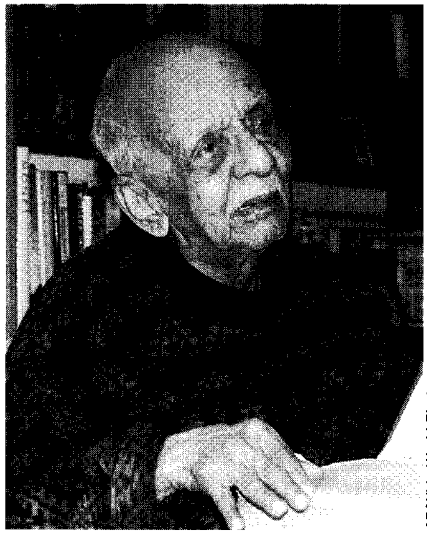
One of his characteristics was a militant sense of right and wrong. The Second World War seemed to him a moral crusade. A student of strategy and armaments, he followed it closely—working, for the first time, as a public commentator and broadcaster. It deeply upset him that in 1940 Gandhi could write that Germans of future generations "will honor Herr Hitler as a genius, as a brave man, a matchless organizer and much more," and that Subhas Chandra Bose could volunteer to join his self-styled "Indian National Army" with the Japanese to fight the British. (Chaudhuri had at one time been secretary to Bose's brother.) Worse than flawed, nationalism of this sort appeared to Chaudhuri to be outright betrayal, making common cause with inhumanity.

And so, in response, he composed after the war—at age fifty-three—his first book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, simply mailing off to Macmillan's in London the manuscript. Its dedication says everything, in a trumpet blast:

> To the memory of the British Empire in India, which conferred subjecthood on us but withheld citizenship; to which yet every one of us threw out the challenge: *Civis Britannicus sum*, because all that was good and living within us was made, shaped and quickened by the same British rule.

He could rise to the cadences of the great men whose prose and verse he had shouted in his boyhood down by the reeds of the river. Fame was immediate. Winston Churchill, no less, let it be known that it was one of the best books he had ever read.

Chaudhuri's view of history was determined by a belief that the Hindus and Muslims had, between them, brought the India of old to a stop. Their



AP/Wide World Photos

Nirad Chaudhuri in 1998.

civilizations were exhausted long ago. By colonizing what was in effect a mere space devoid of intellect and creativity, the British had done the people of India a favor, putting them in touch with the greater world and universal values. India would never have been colonized unless it had been ready to be. And post-colonial nationalism—imported and misunderstood—had led to catastrophe rather than independence: communal riots, a million killed, partition. Gandhi and Nehru were failures.

Indians were not ready to listen to such a critique, and to this day Chaudhuri seems to many of them a scandal. His answer was steadfast. The British, he argued, "gave us a new mind, a new life. I do not say that the British made us. We made ourselves on account of the British law. So why should I be ungrateful to it?"

Cutting loose from India, he settled in Oxford in 1969. There he researched and wrote a life of Max Müller, the great nineteenth-century Sanskrit scholar and philologist. But probably his greatest work was the volume of autobiography he published in 1987, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* Its title comes from lines of Alexander Pope: *Thy hand, Great Anarch! lets the curtain fall / And Universal Darkness buries All*—the very prospect Chaudhuri had in view.

Malcolm Muggeridge, the national jester of that moment, was fond of repeating a bon mot that Indians are the last Englishmen. Poor saps, he was implying, they took seriously the imperial nonsense the British once loved to spout. The British had no idea what to make of someone like Chaudhuri, this person in their midst proclaiming his devotion to the very highest ideals of their own philosophers and poets; usually they were embarrassed but respectful. But he was not content to be learned and ornamental. He weighed modern British society, and found it wanting.

The British in those years had rid themselves of the Empire. Socialists, Fabians, Bloomsburies, liberals, and even Tories—everyone who was anyone—agreed that this was only right. Exploiters, we had taken everything and given nothing. We are all guilty, they chorused, and must do penance for history itself. England expects that every man will beat his breast. Decolonization was a statesmanlike adjustment to the sensibilities of Africa and Asia.

To Chaudhuri, this was damaging nonsense and patronizing humbug. Throughout the Empire, thuggish nationalists were seizing power, destroying the society with nothing to put in its place, substituting massacre for the previous order and law. An underlying assumption was that the natives knew no better and had to be allowed to get on with it. In reality, they were defenseless against tyrants claiming to speak in their name. Far from feeling pleased that they were not living up to the responsibilities they had freely assumed for so long on behalf of others, the British, he insisted in a favorite word, should understand that they had *ratted*. Their will had sud-

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denly failed for no good reason. What he couldn't foresee, he wrote, was that Western culture as a whole would become decadent so quickly, and take down with it all other cultures into a mindless void.

The Oxford house in which he lived was beyond a little garden with flowerbeds, an English retreat, as set out in a thousand novels. In the sitting-room on the ground floor was a disorder of books, a word processor, an elaborate music center. (He liked to compare different recordings of musical masterpieces.)

On May 13, 1989, I went to visit him. In *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* he had made a mistake, rare for him, saying that in December 1941 the Japanese had sunk two battleships, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Renown*, when the second ship was actually the *Repulse*. I wanted to tell him that when I was a boy, the grown-ups had woken me up to watch from the Tangier shore as the two ships slipped out of Gibraltar on that last journey to the Far East. Some weeks after I had seen those gray silhouettes in the dawn, the Japanese had sunk them with all hands, and I witnessed grown-ups sobbing as a result. He was appalled by the misnaming. It was inexplicable, for that Japanese attack had been one of the worst days of his life.

I returned to write in my diary:

> He moves at a run with now and then a wobble in it to suggest that the movement might end in accident. His laugh is a most appealing high cackle. He's written a book, *Self-Destruction*, in Bengali, about the last hundred years in Bengal. On erotics, he's penned a footnote in Greek, commenting, "That's mischief-making." The Indians began to display fossilized minds about fifty years ago, and this might have a physiological basis, hence he's only eaten English food since then. He poses a series of social enigmas from Jane Austen, backed with quotations from Mérimée's *Colomba*. This *Nozze di Figaro* has the best contralto he's heard. And why did the British *rat* in India?

The appropriate compliment for Nirad Chaudhuri—in a world now, after a hundred years, without him—comes from the poem composed as the epigraph for *Stalky & Co.*: *And we all praise famous men*, Kipling wrote, *for they taught us commonsense*. ♦

AN AMERICAN SCULPTOR

Frederick Hart, 1943-1999

By Tom Wolfe

When the sculptor Frederick Hart died on August 13, he was fifty-six and in his artistic prime. American art has lost a giant, a giant in the grand tradition of Augustus St. Gaudens and Frederick MacMonnies. It may take twenty years, but in due course his reputation in the art "world" will catch up with his genius.

Hart's story would fit right into Giorgio Vasari's marvelous *Lives of the Artists*, assuming the great Renaissance biographer might have had a taste for tales from the boiled-peanut, Hoppin' John country of eastern South Carolina. Vasari doted on figures such as Giotto, the peasant boy who is discovered, miraculously, to have the divine gift of pouring living—or at least gloriously lifelike—human forms out of his fingertips and pulling them out of stone and clay. Giotto, as Vasari tells it, was out tending his father's sheep in a field one day in the year 1286 when the painter Cimabue happened to pass by on the way from Florence to a nearby village and saw him drawing a sheep on a slab of rock with a pointed stone. Bowled over by the boy's ability, Cimabue got the family's permission to take Giotto to Florence as his apprentice. With that twist of fortune the flowering of Renaissance painting and sculpture began, and the erstwhile peasant boy became the most famous artist of his time. On the level of unlikely paths, at any rate, Frederick Hart's good fortune out-Lotto's Giotto's.

Hart was born in Atlanta in 1943, but his mother died when he was three, and he was packed off to her relatives in Conway, South Carolina, over near the coast in Horry County, where folks ate their peanuts boiled in salty water and their black-eyed peas cooked with tomatoes, Hoppin' John style. His high school career was distinguished by episodes of juvenile delinquency, his obsession with drawing pictures, particularly during classes in which he was supposed to be doing other things, and the fact that he failed the ninth grade—twice—but nevertheless managed to get into the University of South Carolina at the age of sixteen, by shooting the moon on the Scholastic Aptitude Test. He lasted six months. He was expelled when he became the lone white student to join 250 black students in a 1961 civil rights demonstration and spent four days in jail for breach of the peace.

Informed that the Ku Klux Klan was looking for him, he fled to Washington, D.C., and by and by got a job as an apprentice ornamentalist for the Gianetti Studio of Architectural Sculpture. Ornamentalists molded eggs, darts, acanthus leaves, and the like out of plaster for friezes and cornices. While at Gianetti he was discovered not by a Cimabue but by a stone carver from Italy, Roger Morigi. As Morigi's apprentice, Hart learned to conceive of form in stone from the carver's perspective, from the inside out.

By day Morigi and Hart carved stone for Washington National Cathedral, an enormous structure in the Middle English Gothic style. By night Hart began sculpting on his own, and by the age of twenty-five he was pulling human forms out of clay and stone with a breathtaking facility.

In 1971 he learned that the cathedral would be looking for a sculptor to adorn the entire west façade. The theme was to be the Creation, with the *pièce de résistance* a two-story-high, twenty-one-foot-wide stone bas-relief above the main entrance. Morigi urged Hart to enter the

Tom Wolfe is the author of A Man in Full, The Bonfire of the Vanities, *and many other books. This article is an expanded version of an essay that appeared in* THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *October 2, 1995, and in* Frederick Hart: Sculptor *(Hudson Hills Press).*

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competition. The young would-be sculptor spent three years conceiving and preparing a series of scale models. In 1974, at the age of thirty-one, a complete unknown, a stone carver by trade, Hart won what would turn out to be the most monumental commission for religious sculpture in the United States in the twentieth century. He spent ten years creating the full-size models in clay and overseeing Morigi and his men as they carved *Ex Nihilo*, depicting mankind emerging from the swirling rush of chaos.

Hart was now at the same point in his career as Giotto when Giotto did his first great painting, the Virgin Mary trembling before the Archangel Gabriel, for the high altar of the Abbey of Florence in 1301. From that time on, Giotto's life was an uninterrupted ascension to wealth, the company and patronage of the rich and powerful, surpassing fame, and the universal admiration of his fellow artists.

For Hart, the more earthly rewards came soon enough. In 1982, after a terrific imbroglio in which veterans protested the tombstone-like, anti-heroic look of the black wall chosen for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, he was commissioned to add a group of three soldiers to the site. In 1985, Ronald Reagan appointed him to the Commission of Fine Arts. In 1994, he completed a statue of Jimmy Carter for the State Capitol in Atlanta and was at work on a statue of the late senator Richard Russell and a statue of Luis Carlos Galan, the Colombian presidential candidate slain by drug cartel assassins, to be erected in front of the presidential palace in Bogota. By that time, many thousands of his smaller pieces cast in clear acrylic resin had been sold through galleries. Add to this the throngs who came annually to see his *Three Soldiers* and *Ex Nihilo*, and Hart could probably claim the largest following of any living American sculptor.

All in all, an ascension of the Giotto dimension—but one thing was missing: the artistic atmosphere of fourteenth-century Florence, not to mention a Vasari or two to chronicle his success.

Just what this meant Hart found out in the very first week after the dedication of *Ex Nihilo* in 1982 (two years before the completion of the entire façade). In the press, even the local press, there was nothing, save a single rather slighting remark in passing in the Style section of the *Washington Post*. In the art press in the weeks and months and years that followed—nothing, not even so much as a one-paragraph review. Thirteen years at work on the most important American religious commission of the twentieth century, and—*nihil*, a hollow silence. It was as if the west side of Washington National Cathedral, the seventh-largest cathedral in the world, were invisible.

All photos: Hudson Hills

Frederick Hart modeling Ex Nihilo.

But why? As Hart was now able to figure out at his leisure, by the 1980s all work in the Giotto tradition of glorious lifelike human forms, not just his, was being buried in the most ludicrous collapse of taste in the history of the American art world. In the case of sculpture, specifically, matters had plunged to the level of outright farce. The American art "world," as it was known, was in fact a small circle of dealers, museum curators, collectors, and established artists who created and certified reputations. This was not a cabal, simply a circle of fashion. In 1976 the author of *The Painted Word* estimated their number at no more than three-thousand souls nationwide, of whom about 2,700 lived in New York City or nearby. The American art "village," he called it—and yet art critics everywhere, even in the popular press,

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Hart's St. Peter at the National Cathedral.

were content to serve as obedient little subalterns conveying the village's decisions to the public at large. In the 1940s this network was swept by a vogue for abstract art. In the 1950s and 1960s American corporations began building glass towers with bare concrete and granite plazas out front, and in the plazas they began placing abstract sculptures, the favorites being twisted extrusions in the Isamu Noguchi manner and boluses with holes in them à la Henry Moore. Among architects this came to be known as the "Turd in the Plaza" school of sculpture, after a remark by James Wines, who said, "I don't care if they want to build those boring glass boxes, but why do they always deposit that little turd in the plaza when they leave?"

In the 1970s and the 1980s the art bureaucrats—from such government creations as the National Endowment for the Arts' "Art in Public Places" program and the General Services Administration's Art-in-Architecture program—came into their own and started promoting the village's latest fashion, "the sculpture of object-ness" (in which sculpture was not supposed to evoke, much less represent, anything other than its "weight" and "gravity" as an object). This led to one howler after another. The bureaucrats kept commissioning large public sculptures that the public loathed, even to the point of going through protracted administrative hearings and court battles to have the loathsome objects, in all of their grave and weighty object-ness, removed.

The howler of all howlers came in 1976, when the City of Hartford, Connecticut, approached the National Endowment for the Arts to put up part of the money and find a sculptor to provide a major work for a choice site downtown to celebrate Hartford's eminence as the Athens of western south-central New England. In due course a man named Carl Andre arrived with thirty-six rocks, huge rocks but just plain rocks from off the ground, and had some unionized elves arrange them in a triangular pattern, like bowling pins. He then presented the City Council with a bill for $87,000. While the citizens hooted and jeered and called them imbeciles, the councilmen tamped the sides of their heads with the heels of their hands—and, prodded by the NEA, paid up.

Vasari attributed all remarkable developments in art history to God. He said that God sent Michelangelo to earth to perfect the art of Florence, and Raphael to prove that a genius among artists could also be a perfectly polite and cultivated gentleman. If he was right, then God sent Carl Andre to Hartford to prove the correctness of the British playwright Tom Stoppard's crack, "Contemporary art is imagination without skill."

In the wake of the Hartford fiasco and many similar ones in the 1980s, Hart and other representational sculptors began to believe that the collapse of taste had finally hit bottom and that a rebirth of figurative sculpture—and skill—must be at hand, even in the New York art village. After all, the Giotto tradition was not dead. It was merely invisible to the village and its subalterns in the provinces. There were still plenty of municipal, institutional, religious, and civic leaders who, wanting to pay tribute to great themes or great individuals, bypassed the art bureaucracies and turned directly to sculptors with skill, skill in portraying the idealized human form, to do it. Prime examples were Hart's *Ex Nihilo*, Raymond Kaskey's *Portlandia*, in Portland, Oregon, Audrey Flack's *Civitas* at Rock Hill, South Carolina, and Eric Parks's *Elvis Statue* in Memphis.

The public loved the figures they produced, reveled in them, sometimes with startling displays of emotion. When Kaskey's *Portlandia*, a colossal figure of a woman in a toga, arrived in Portland by

A 1992 plaster bust of Hart's wife, Lindy.

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barge on the Willamette River in 1985, thousands of citizens lined the shore and boulevards, cheering and crying. Parents lifted their children up so they could touch the bronze goddess's outstretched fingertips. The art press, however, continued to ignore such work, as did the museums and major galleries. And so did the art schools. By 1994 there were only half a dozen offering full-scale curricula in the sculpting of the human form. Eighty years ago no sculpture department would have offered anything else.

In 1993, Hart began convening a group of artists, scholars, philosophers, and poets at his home in Virginia to try to create a new aesthetic for the arts generally. They go by the name of the Centerists, but their thinking parallels that of a broader movement known as the Idealist school of contemporary representational art. One of the major theorists is Pierce Rice, who argues in his book *Man as Hero* that the great tradition of Western art has been, and should continue to be, not merely representational work but the idealization of the human form, the glorification of both heroic individuals and the heroic possibilities of mankind. At bottom, Idealism rests upon a religious assumption taken for granted in the Renaissance, namely that human beings are created in the image of God.

Within the New York art village such a notion is so *infra dig*, the dealers, curators, collectors, and artists who establish fashions don't even bother to condemn it. They avert their eyes. It is . . . in *such poor taste*. The tasteful view today is precisely the opposite and, as the Idealists see it, bears out a prediction Nietzsche made just over a hundred years ago when he announced that God was dead. Men no longer believed in God, he said, but they had not shed their own sense of guilt. So henceforth they would still feel guilty but would have no one to turn to for forgiveness, causing them to loathe themselves and one another. As a result, the twentieth century would be a century of wars catastrophic beyond all imagining, waged by human beings who looked upon their loathsome selves as no different, morally, from other beasts—mere organisms, one and all, driven on by urges and appetites but constantly starved for meaning in their lives.

In recent years, the art village, the circle, has begun to sanction a form of figurative sculpture sometimes called I.C.U. Art (for "Intensive Care Unit"), in which self-loathing and loathing of the human species reach a nadir, from the Idealist point of view. Typical creations of I.C.U. sculpture are the incinerated and flagellated corpse of a tiny woman with her bloody spinal column popping out through the skin of her back (Kiki Smith, *Untitled*, 1991); a bowl of plums, each plum possessing a screaming human mouth with purple lips and gnashing purple teeth (Rona Pondick, *Plums*, 1993); the lower half of the torso of a man wearing undershorts, ribbed socks, and Topsider sneakers with gaping holes in his legs and left buttock that look like crosses between abscess craters and plumbing drains (Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 1991); and the blackened figure of a man with no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no ears, hogtied in a jack-knifed position (Antony Gormley, *Proof*, 1984). By 1994, the loathing of Homo sapiens among the fashionable sculptors had reached such an intensity that a University of Chicago art historian, Barbara Maria Stafford, was driven to ask: "Why, in order to be serious, do things have to be ugly?"

Young sculptors with skills and aspirations resembling Frederick Hart's find themselves in a bind—felt even at the handful of art schools where figurative sculpture is taught. Do they choose the fashionable direction, which at the moment is I.C.U. Art? True, it demands an appetite for the ugly and requires (and tolerates) only minimal skill, but it at least holds out the possibility of being taken seriously by the art worldlings who certify reputations. Or do they choose Idealism, with its guarantee of . . . *eyes averted* . . . perhaps for a lifetime?

As for Hart himself, his career is very likely fireproof. If recent history is any indication, those who want to celebrate Homo sapiens' hopes and feats will continue to seek out his surpassing skill at bringing alive the human form in the tradition Giotto introduced with his models for the campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore, and people will love it. Repeatedly over the past ten years, the public has demonstrated not merely its preference but its passion for the work of the Harts, the Kaskeys, the Flacks, and the Parkses. The question is whether public pressure will at last crack the art world's much-loathed New York Wall of taste or merely harden it. ♦

Hart's St. Paul at the National Cathedral.

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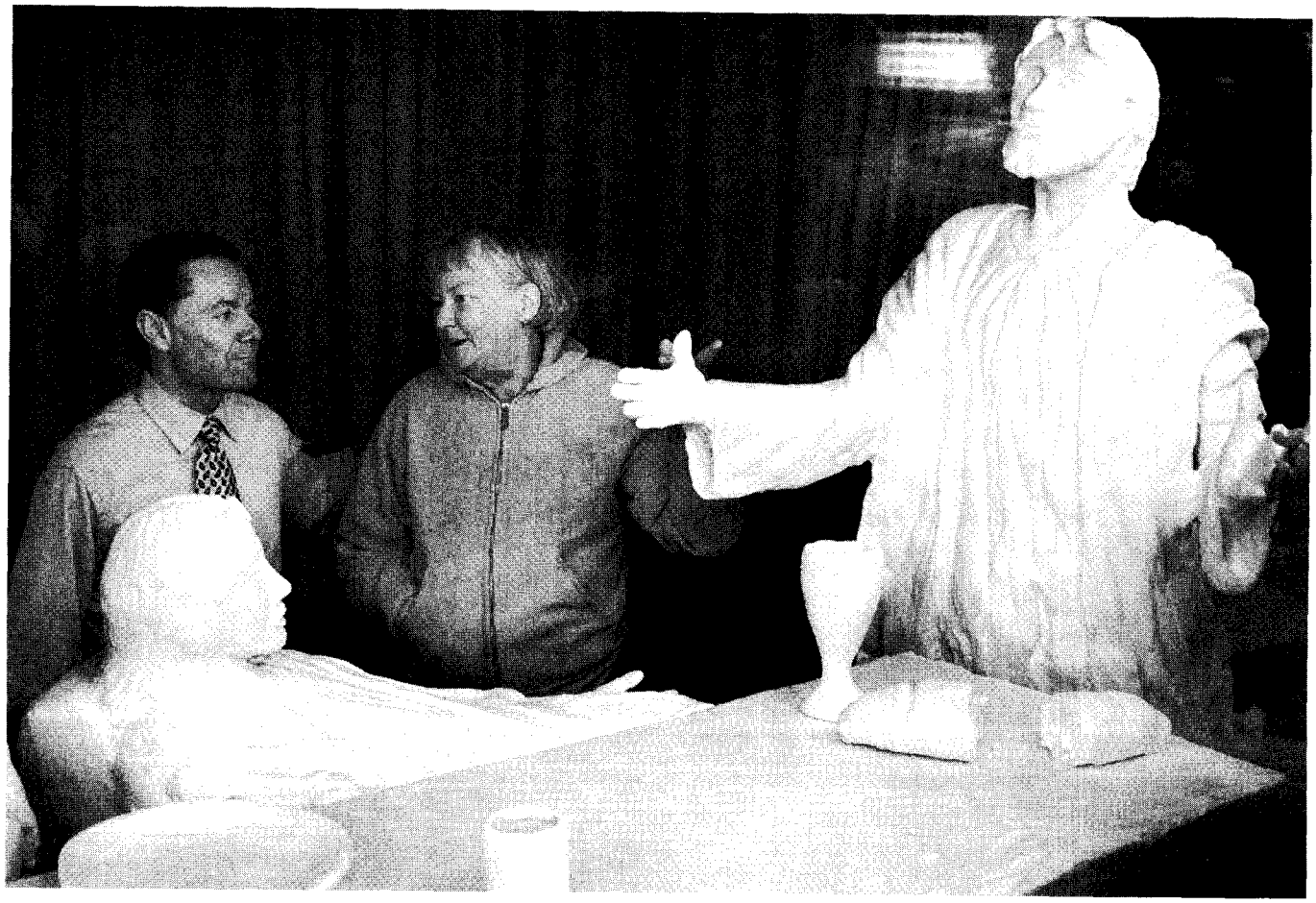
Buttering Up the Candidate



Republican presidential hopeful Gary Bauer talks with Norma "Duffy" Lyons in front of her rendition of the Last Supper, made of butter, at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines, August 12, 1999. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall)

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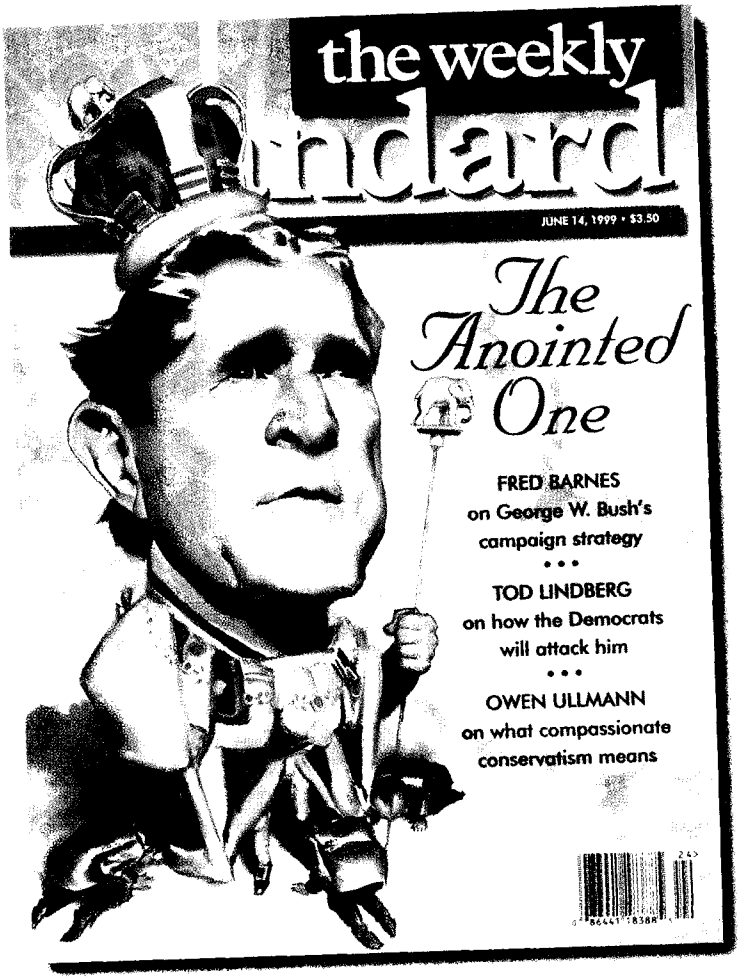

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